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The Washington Monthly

JULY/AUGUST
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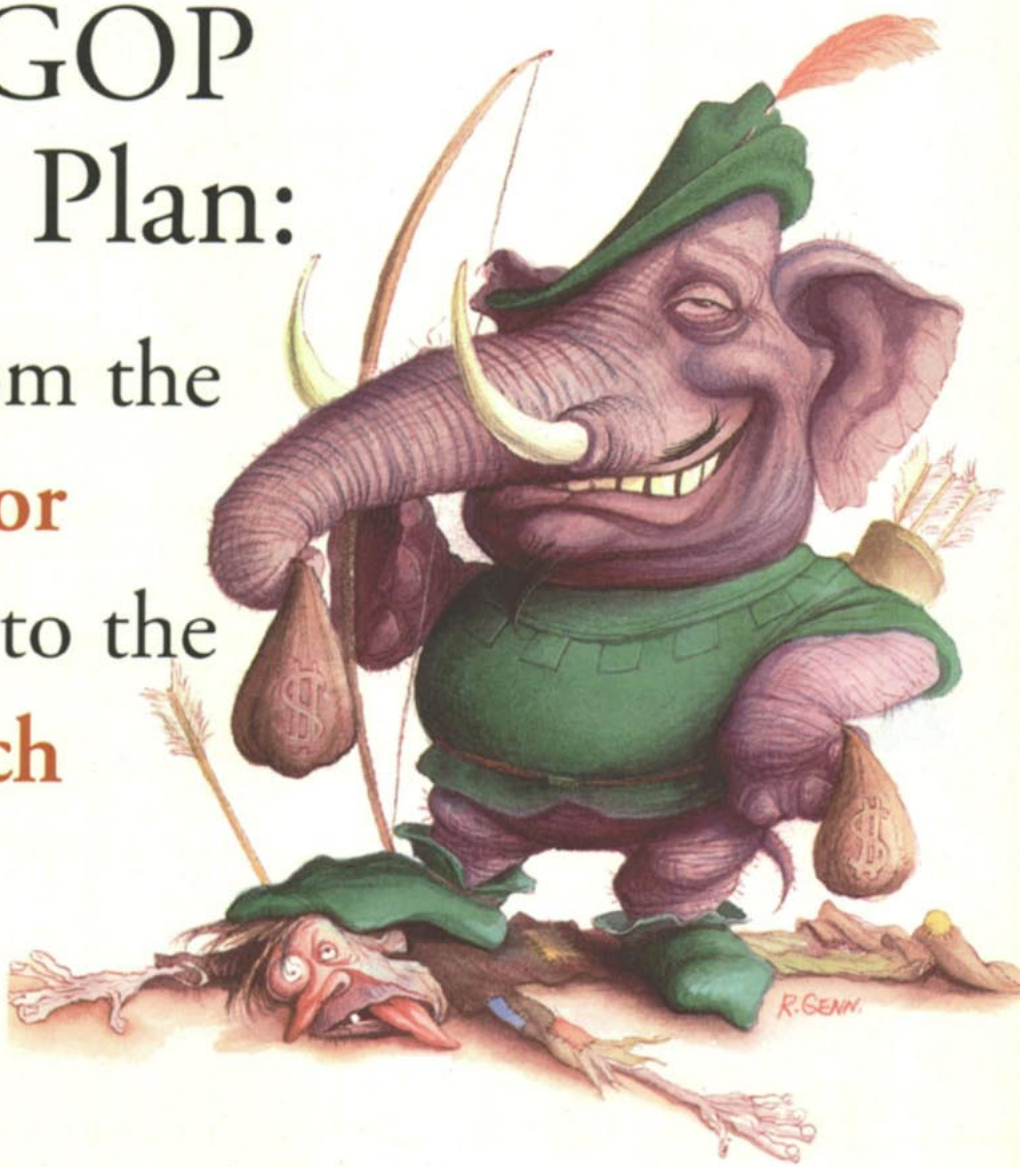

by Michelle Cottle

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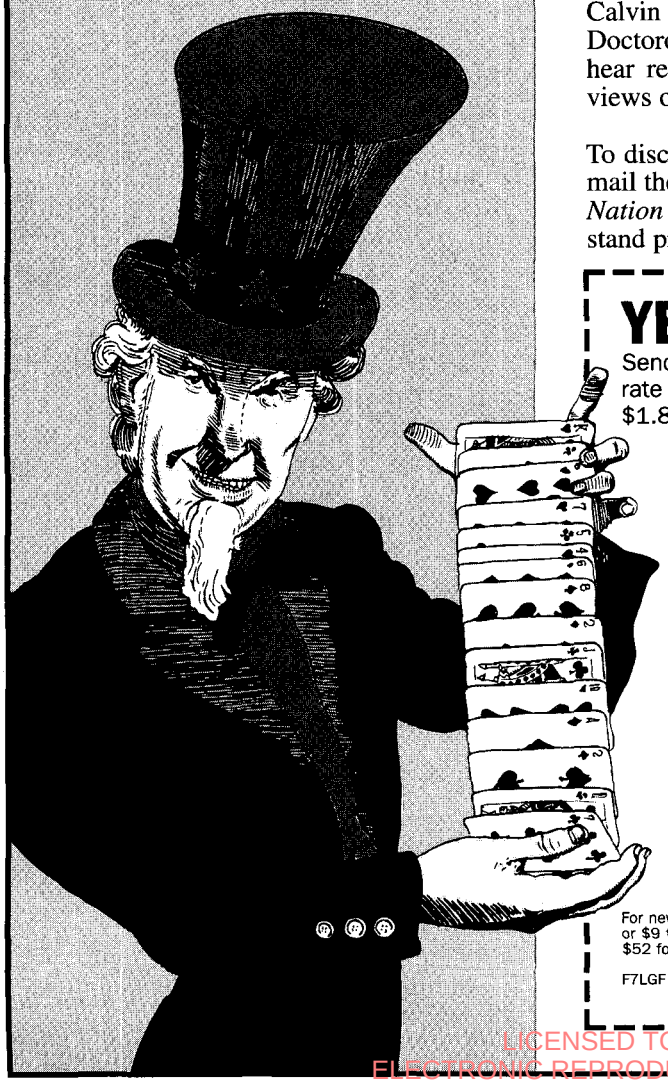

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Letters

A Quick Fix

I read your May article on Medicare and Medicaid fraud with particular interest. As a trial judge who has sat on a dozen or more Medicaid fraud cases in New York state, I have observed numerous ways that have been devised to cheat the system. I would say the cases I have tried during the past six years involved the loss of more than $20 million to the state and federal government.

The solution to cutting down on fraud may not be as difficult as was postulated by the authors of the article. There is one glaring defect in the system: The government agency that approves and makes payments does not send a copy of the medical provider's invoices to the patient. In most of the cases before me, the patient was unaware of the fraud being committed. As incentive for people to contact the appropriate agency so that fraud can be detected, we could offer the patient (who is generally indigent) a reward—such as 5 to 10 percent of the money saved or recovered. A simple procedure such as this could stop fraud in its early stages.

HERBERT A. POSNER
Jamaica, NY

Just Another Dis?

I have never declined a request for an interview, and I would have been more than happy to discuss *The Washington Times* (May 1997) with Nurith Aizenman. The errors concerning my tenure could easily have been avoided with a simple phone call.

Bill Cheshire staged his walkout not for the reasons you mention. He had been led to believe he would get the job I was offered and had been gunning for me from day one. I was in charge of editorial policy as well as news coverage, and not once did I receive a hint of a whisper from any representative of the owners as to what our editorial line should be on an issue.

The reporter who was trying to start a Guild unit at that time circulated a petition protesting my Contra editorial. He got 27, not 55, reporters to sign. Some were recent hires and several told me privately that abusive threats were part of the pressure tactics. When he couldn't get more than 27 to sign, the matter was dropped.

I have been in this business 51 years. Do you really think I am dumb enough to ask someone how he/she voted in "the last election?"

Your piece concludes that *The Washington Times* is "not just that Moonie paper anymore." The *Los Angeles Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, in lengthy front page stories, reached that conclusion in 1986.

By and large yours was a fair story. It could have been a lot meatier if someone had bothered calling me.

ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE
Washington, DC

One comment on the *Monthly*'s article on *The Washington Times*. The next time one of your reporters writes a paragraph that calls me obsessive, denigrates 10 years of defense reporting, and attacks my professional competence, I think the least the reporter should do is call me so I can defend myself. To me, that's Journalism 101.

ROWAN SCARBOROUGH
Washington, DC

Nurith Aizenman responds:

Although I interviewed 20 current and former Washington Times *employees for my piece, I regret not contacting Arnaud de Borchgrave and Rowan Scarborough.*

Regarding Bill Cheshire's resignation, I noted that "de Borchgrave vehemently denied...that the Times *did not enjoy total editorial independence." Nonetheless, Cheshire's allegations of owner meddling contributed to the "rumors of Moon's influence" that plagued the paper in its early years—the situation I was using this episode to describe.*

Numerous press accounts of the petition protesting Mr. de Borchgrave's editorial announcing the Times*-sponsored "Nicaraguan Freedom Fund" listed the number of signatories at 55; whatever the correct figure, the fact remains that a significant group of* Times *reporters registered their objection.*

The reporter who told me that at his job interview Mr. de Borchgrave asked him how he had voted in the last election is a veteran journalist in whose reliability I have great confidence.

As for Rowan Scarborough's complaint, the paragraph in question criticized the Times *as a whole for its fixation with the feminization of the military. Scarborough was mentioned only in passing as the author of an article I used to illustrate my point.*

Your report fell far short of being an interesting account of *The Washington Times*'s process from what you describe as its early days as *persona non grata* among the D.C. press corps to something of a useful curiosity. I can only speculate whether folks at the paper would consider the piece just another "dis" by a journalistic grandstander. But I can say emphatically that this report went to every length to disregard the Reverend Moon and to perpetuate a culture of contempt toward the Unification Church. How else to interpret the repeated use of the pejorative term, "Moonies"? How else to interpret the tone of contempt toward the Reverend Moon? How else to interpret gratuitous commendations of journalists accompanied by back-handed references to their choice of faith?

"Dis" a newspaper if you will. But don't succumb to the lowest form of bigotry and disparage an entire religious community in the process.

PETER D. ROSS, ESQ.
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
THE HOLY SPIRIT ASSOCIATION
FOR THE UNIFICATION OF
WORLD CHRISTIANITY
New York, NY

The Bigger Picture

Curtis Gans's jeremiad against "phony campaign commercials" ("Stop the Madness!" May 1997) certainly has a point, but Gans is wrong to pin all the blame for the rising cost of campaigns and declining voter turnout on the increased use of TV advertising. Analysis by the Campaign Study Group has shown that—contrary to

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public perceptions—the proportion of the average congressional candidate's budget spent on broadcast advertising has remained fairly constant. From 1990 to 1994, House incumbents spent about 25 percent of their money on TV and radio. The average Senate incumbent spent about one-third. (Final totals for 1996 are not yet available.) Indeed, Gans's own data suggests there has not been that big a leap in the importance of TV advertising to campaigns. From 1976 to 1994, if we are to use his numbers, advertising has gone from consuming just under half of a candidate's budget to six-tenths.

As one of the leading experts on voting behavior, Gans is to be heeded when he warns us about declining voter turnout. But the core problem with this system is candidates' dependence on private money to pay for their campaigns. Until we change that, we're just nibbling around the edges.

MICAH L. SIFRY
PUBLIC CAMPAIGN
Washington, DC

As much as I admire Curtis Gans's powerful case against televised political advertising, I fear that his range of solutions may not be equal to the emergency. Without the brightest of bright-line rules against them, TV ads will go on undermining the foundations of popular government. The constitution should be amended to forbid, simply and clearly, the purchase of televised advertising in political campaigns.

HAL RIEDL
Baltimore, MD

Apocalypse When?

Mr. Easterbrook takes me to task ("Apocalypse Later," May 1997) for including in my book a large number of recent record-setting extreme weather events around the world. Regrettably, he fails to acknowledge my explicit caveat that these weather events become significant only when they are added to four other compelling bodies of evidence of climatic instability: the warming-driven spread of infectious diseases, the weather-related losses by the world's property insurers (which are rising by orders of magnitudes), the consensus findings of the world's leading 2,000 scientists, and a series of troubling and rapid changes to the Earth's oceans, glaciers, forests, and mountains.

Are my concerns overinflated? The truth is that neither Mr. Easterbrook nor I nor the best of the world's scientists know the answer. While the science regarding rates of future change is uncertain, that uncertainty cuts both ways. The reality could be far worse than the science is currently able to determine. Research indicates that prehistoric climate changes have occurred as abrupt shifts rather than gradual transitions and that small changes have precipitated catastrophic outcomes.

ROSS GELBSPAN
Brookline, MA

Firing Back

In his April article "A New Breed of Hired Gun," Preston Lerner seriously misleads his readers. He refers to my early college grades and first few jobs, but never tells you that was back in the 1955-1964 era. He attempts to falsely portray me as "new" and inexperienced, but never mentions anything about my extensive work in auto safety since 1965...as if the past 30 years somehow don't exist!

But during these past 30 years, the courts have repeatedly ruled that my hands-on evaluation of accident vehicles and exemplar vehicles, plus extensive studies of crash tests and other efforts, has qualified me as an auto safety expert in product-liability trials coast-to-coast. While he criticizes the Mistich case as his leading "no brainer" example, Mr. Lerner conveniently fails to note that in January of 1996, the Louisiana Supreme Court affirmed the original *Mistich v. VW* plaintiff verdict and also the trial judge's ruling of my expertise. Where did Mr. Lerner get the expertise to condemn the trial testimony, the judge's verdict, and the Louisiana Supreme Court?

Mr. Lerner also ignored a most basic rule of journalistic integrity, since he never called me to check my version of his illusory story.

BYRON BLOCH
Potomac, MD

The Washington Monthly

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Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $39.50; two years, $76.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $7 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. Send correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and address changes to Box 587, Mt. Morris IL, 61054. For address changes, provide six weeks' notice and include old address label. Send subscription complaints to Charles Peters, *The Washington Monthly*, 1611 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009. *The Washington Monthly* is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. For reprint rights call Sherri LaRowe at (202) 462-0128. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly Co., 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Printed in U.S.A.

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ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to *The Washington Monthly*, Box 587, Mt. Morris IL, 61054. Periodicals postage paid at Mechanicsburg, PA. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Send manuscripts and letters to: Editors, 1611 Connecticut Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20009 or e-mail to WashMonth@aol.com.

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Rampant Rottweilers • Cheap Coke • Cheap Chic • Credit-Crazed Juveniles • Yogi Lawyers

SHOULDN'T PAULA JONES HAVE sued Trooper Ferguson, *The American Spectator*, and the *Los Angeles Times* instead of Bill Clinton? There is no evidence that she was sufficiently angered by Clinton's alleged effort to "get to know her" in the Little Rock hotel room to even consider the possibility of legal action—until a year later when Trooper Ferguson was quoted in the *Spectator* and the *Times* as saying a certain "Paula" had told him after leaving the hotel room that she was available as a permanent girlfriend for the governor. That was what made her mad. Bill Clinton didn't say it. Trooper Ferguson did, or so the *Spectator* and the *Times* reported.

• • • • • • • •

ONE OF THE WEIRDER EXCESSES OF the *Bonfire of the Vanities* era was dressing children in designer clothes. Now the fad appears to be returning. The biggest names in the field are Versace and Moschino. Beth Jaffe, a New Jersey lawyer, buys outfits from both for her four-year old daughter. "It's an extension of the way I like to dress," she told *The Wall Street Journal*, "and I like to think I dress well."

• • • • • • • •

ANOTHER TREND TOWARD EXCESS is in the credit-card debt of college students. Sixty-five percent of them carry plastic. The amount they owe nearly doubled between 1990 and 1995. One factor in this may be that, according to Joshua Wolf Shenk of *U.S. News & World Report*, "78 percent of college juniors and seniors don't know that the best way to figure out the cost of a loan is to look at the interest rate." But even more important, Shenk suspects, is the tendency of today's young people to think they have to emulate the "pretty cushy" lifestyle of Courtney Cox's character in TV's Friends. And for most young people that means going into debt.

In the early 1990s, we seemed to be entering an era of cheap chic, which I applauded in an article I wrote for this magazine in June 1990. Chic is always silly. But the cheap kind is better than the expensive because it does not get people into debt or cause them to choose occupations on the basis of money. But even if cheap is no longer chic, at least the trend lasted for a few years—which is a lot better than the era of New Idealism which I predicted at the onset of the '80s and which was strangled in its crib by the greed that dominated that decade.

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SPEAKING OF DISMAYING trends, how about this one—the Rottweiler is now the second most popular dog in America. I'm not kidding; I got it straight from the AP. Does this mean we're becoming more vicious—or are we just more afraid? Whatever the implications for the national pysche may be, one thing is clear—we're more likely to get bitten. Dog bites, the same Associated Press story reports, have increased from 585,000 in 1986 to 800,000.

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IN THE MIDST OF ALL THESE trends in the wrong direction, I find one that delights me. It seems that some e-mail is getting there later than letters delivered by the postal service. For years, my friends with computers have chided me for not getting with the computer revolution so that we could share the joy of almost instant communication through e-mail. One English user complained to *The Wall Street Journal*, "Frankly, a clod horse could move between Kensington and Hampstead faster than [e-mail]. The technology we boast is going to liberate us from offices isn't dependable." Sweet music to the ears of the computer-challenged.

Too many universities ignore teaching ability, hiring solely on the basis of degrees and publications. The result has been too many students who are too bored to learn.

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A COUPLE OF YEARS ago, we printed some figures demonstrating how the bureaucrats at the Washington headquarters of various federal agencies had managed to protect their own jobs while sacrificing to the ax those employees in the field who are often doing the real work. A similar phenomenon has been taking place in the military. A Navy source recently told Matthew Miller, a former OMB official who is now a columnist, that for the first time in history more than half the Navy's officers are in support functions. And an Army source revealed that of over 495,000 active duty soldiers, only 120,000 man the 10 fighting divisions, with another 80,000 providing essential logistics for the fighting men—

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leaving 295,000 whose activities are less than vital. A Pentagon watchdog group called Business Executives for National Security estimates that only 30 percent of the military budget goes to combat forces.

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SPEAKING OF DOWNSIZING, ANOTHER place to keep your fingers crossed that it's being done the right way is the National Weather Service, which has announced plans to cut up to 200 jobs. And you guessed it, the cuts aren't in Washington, but in Texas, at its hurricane tracking center in Florida, and at a tornado tracking center in Oklahoma. "They are compromising the safety of...people," one emergency official told the Associated Press.

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WHY DO WE ALLOW OUT-OF-state contributions to political campaigns? Shouldn't the people of each state control their own elections and not have to subject themselves to the influence of outside money? The situation is scandalous. Forty-two percent of the contributions to senators come from out-of-state. In the House, the percentage of out-of-district contributions is 56—that's right, 56. Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi gets 80 percent of his contributions from out-of-state. And Floyd Spence of South Carolina, who is chairman of the House National Security Committee, gets 94 percent from outside his district.

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A COUPLE OF ISSUES AGO, I EXPRESSED curiousity about what the H&R in H&R Block stood for. A reader, Kevin Herrington of St. Louis, tells me it's Henry and Richard. He also tells me that Henry's son, Tom, has done something I would admire. At the age of 41, Tom quit his job as CEO of H&R Block to teach math to eighth-graders in a school with mostly minority students. Tom had been successful as a CEO—during his tenure H&R Block's earnings increased by 25 percent. But he took a 98 percent pay cut in his $618,000 salary because he believed "the people who are the real heroes out there are the teachers."

It's a sad comment on the insane certification requirement in the public schools that a Catholic school was, according to Dana Fields of the Associated Press, "one of the few where he could work without the certificate." Here's a man who spent his career computing taxes and the public schools won't let him teach eighth-grade math.

The *Monthly* began its crusade against this kind of stupid credentialism in our second issue in 1969. We and others of like mind have made some progress. Forty-two states now have some form of alternative certification that permits people without education courses to begin teaching. But they still have to take the education courses at night or in the summer to be fully certified. A few of the methodology courses are useful, but many are junk—insults to the intelligence of the kind of people we want to attract to teaching.

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SPEAKING OF CHANGING CAREERS, another *Monthly* crusade—to get lawyers out of law offices and into useful work—seems to be having some success. According to a recent article by Steven Ginsberg in *The Washington Post*, the percentage of law graduates not practicing law has doubled since 1988. "Every lawyer I know has expressed interest in doing something else," Ginsberg was told by Hillary Mantis, director of the Career Planning Center at Fordham University's School of Law.

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THERE IS EVEN A RAY OF HOPE FOR those who can't escape the practice of law, if they live in California, that is. There, troubled lawyers can get Continuing Legal Education Credit for the Transcendental Meditation Program offered by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, which promises to "reduce stress," to eliminate "neurochemical endocrine imbalances that produce anxiety, inefficiency, health problems, and substance abuse," and to train "mind and body to function in a relaxed state even in dynamic, stressful activity."

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SUPPOSE YOU'RE A BUREAUCRAT faced with a tough investigator who just might uncover some embarrassing facts about your agency. One time-honored technique, often practiced by officials whose shoulders are being peered over by an examiner from the OMB or an auditor from the GAO, is for the agency that might be embarrassed if his inquiry is too zealous, to offer the examiner or auditor the prospect of future employment at a higher salary. I have often heard of such offers being dangled, but only recently did I learn of one that was actually made and accepted.

The District of Columbia lottery agency, faced with a major investigation for alleged corrupt practices by its employees, hired the chief investigator away from the D.C. inspector general's office with a 40 percent pay increase. It appears that the ploy has worked. According to *The Washington Times*, the inspector general says the damage to the investigation is "irreparable."

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SPEAKING OF INSPECTORS GENERAL, Michael R. Bromwich, who is the one at the Department of Justice, recently found a pattern of corruption among prison guards who were being bribed to smuggle drugs to inmates. A few months ago, *60 Minutes* revealed pervasive corruption among Customs officials who are being bribed to let illegal drugs into the country. We hear one account after another of how illegal drugs corrupt law enforcement. We're learning we're in a war that we can't win. "U.S. War on Drugs Yields Few Victories," is the headline over a long article by Glenn Frankel in a June issue of *The Washington Post*. "Cocaine and heroin are cheaper, more plentiful and purer than ever before," writes Frankel. "Worldwide production of the two drugs has more than doubled."

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IF WE WOULD LEGALIZE DRUGS, AS this magazine has long advocated, we would end the corruption. And drugs would no longer be endowed with the

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glow of the illicit. We should, of course, not permit them to be endowed with new glamour by the kind of advertising we never should have permitted for cigarettes and alchohol. With the glamour gone the use of drugs should decline. Public interest groups could help the decline as they have in the case of tobacco by their campaigns against smoking. But there is no denying drugs will continue to be used. The point is the terrible corruption would end. And if we spent half as much on treatment for addicts—many of whom aren't able to get any help today—as we now spend on the drug war, we might be able to dramatically minimize the addiction problem, if not eliminate it altogether.

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I HOPE THE TRIAL OF TIMothy McVeigh has convinced judges that keeping TV out of the court room is a good idea. A recent survey of judges by Steven A. Holmes of *The New York Times* suggest this is the case. The clincher is the contrast between the Simpson criminal case where TV was permitted and the Simpson civil trial where it was not.

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WHEN I WAS A STUDENT in New York in the late forties, I had a good many gay friends. There was one thing about them that puzzled me. It was their proclivity for casual sex—meaning brief encounters with total strangers whose faces they often didn't even see. In those days, the encounters usually took place in Turkish baths. This practice later became a major factor in the spread of AIDS. For a while the bathhouses seemed to be dying. But now it appears that they are making a comeback because, according to Daniel J. Kevles writing in *The New York Times Book Review*, "the advent of therapeutic drugs—notably the protease inhibitors—appear to have made AIDS a disease you can live with rather than die from." Mr. Kevles, who directs the program in science, ethics, and public policy at California Institute of Technology, says that "the bathhouses are thriving" once more.

One answer to this problem is to encourage gay marriage. How can conservatives oppose such unions?

Gay marriage encourages the mature relationships and social stability conservatives are supposed to value and discourages the casual bathhouse sex that conservatives deplore.

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A KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVER OF the defense industry recently explained to me why we seem to be constantly having to put billions into a new generation of fighter planes when we had thought we had achieved technological superiority. The reason is that the defense industry sells our planes to other nations, meaning potential opponents get what we've got and then *we* have to get something better. Now you know how the military-industrial complex continues to survive.

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NOT LONG AGO WE PUBLISHED AN article criticizing today's rich for not being more like Andrew Carnegie and giving substantial parts of their fortune to good causes such as the public libraries he endowed. Bill Gates, who was one of the delinquents singled out by the article, must have been slipped a copy by a friend. Recently, Gates visited a District of Columbia library to announce that Washington would be one of 43 cities receiving funding from Microsoft to provide their public libraries with access to the Internet. But Gates is not ready for canonization yet. Increased access to the Internet is quite likely to benefit Microsoft. And on the same day he was making the library announcement, Gates managed to take care of more immediate Microsoft business. He joined other high-tech executives to lobby Congress for legislation favorable to their industry.

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IF YOU NEED MORE EVIdence that our public schools could stand improvement, consider that 25 percent of the 1995 public high school graduates enrolled in Maryland colleges have been required to take remedial reading. Incredibly enough, a similar study of 1994 high school graduates in Virginia also found 25 percent needing remedial reading courses. In both states, large numbers of public high school graduates needed help in math and English as well.

Yet the public school establishment seems smugly unwilling to face its shortcomings. In the District of

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Columbia, where any parent knows the public schools are much worse than those of Maryland and Virginia, "none of the 164 principals and only 15 of more than 5000 teachers received unsatisfactory evaluations for the 1995-96 school year," according to Karyn Spellman of *The Washington Times.*

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TO THE RICH PEOPLE WHO DON'T think they should pay higher taxes than the other fellows, I want to ask how much of your success can be attributed to tax breaks and government subsidies or loans that came to you courtesy of your fellow citizens? How much was due to the good fortune of being born into a family that was well-off enough to make sure you received the health care and education that would enable you to make full use of your talents? And how many of you had the good fortune to be born with enough talent—whether as an entrepreneur, artist, actor, musician, or athlete—to enable you to make a lot of money? If you've been lucky, why not share your wealth with those who weren't so fortunate, so that at least their children will have a better chance in life?

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"I AM NOW A PROUD MEMBER OF A craft that today would not grant me entry," *New York Daily News* Editor Pete Hamil recently observed. "There is no room in my trade anymore for high school dropouts or for people without university degrees." Which takes me back to credentialism. What we need is to apply the audition principle of the performing arts to the many other jobs where a performance test makes sense. For writers, look not at the degrees or their publication credits, but at samples of their writing. To our immense benefit, *The Washington Monthly* once did that. It was 27 years ago and the person involved was Suzannah Lessard. She had no college degree. She had never been published. But we liked her unpublished samples and hired her. And you probably know she did remarkable work for us before going on to two decades at *The New Yorker* and her recent distinguished biography of Stanford White.

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THE HMOS HAVE COOKED UP another unpleasant surprise for you next time you wake up in a hospital. At your bedside you will find not your family doctor, but someone called a "hospitalist." It seems the HMOs have discovered it's more cost effective to have one of these fellows handle patients' questions and answers than to pay different personal physicians for hospital visits.

Of course, this may not matter much since, as *The Wall Street Journal*'s Nancy Ann Jeffrey points out, "many people today barely know their primary-care doctor." My wife's HMO changed hers three times in four years.

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TEACHING IS ANOTHER PROFESSION where an audition should be decisive. Of course, it must be accompanied by subject knowledge, but that knowledge without a knack for the classroom is worthless. Unfortunately, too many universities completely ignore teaching ability, hiring solely on the basis of degrees, and promoting solely on the basis of publications. The result has been too many students who are too bored to learn.

I suspect that, along with snobbery, intellectual insecurity on the part of those doing the hiring has a lot to do with their reliance on credentials. One hates to think of the number of Pete Hamils and Suzannah Lessards who are not getting a chance because the boss is afraid to bet on his own judgement.

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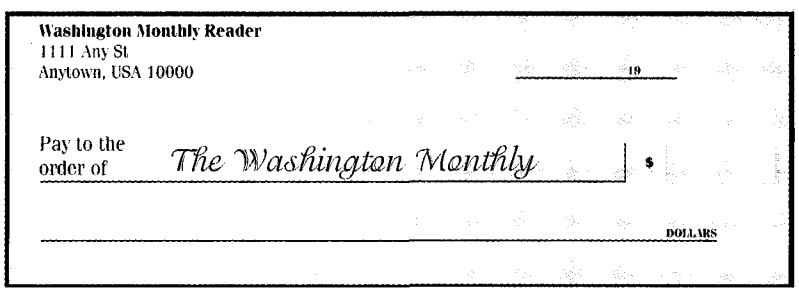
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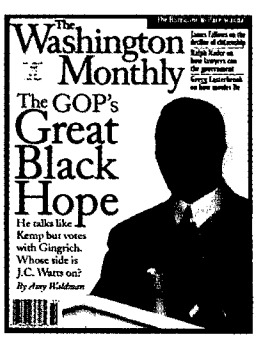

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Since the publication of Locked in the Cabinet, *Robert Reich's tale of life in the Clinton administration, the former secretary of labor has come under attack for relaying events with less than a strict adherence to the facts. But we believe that Reich has betrayed neither the truth, nor his readers. What he recounts is the truth as he saw it, and we applaud his attempt to capture the nuances and nuisances of the nation's capitol. So while others may point to his failure to tell the literal truth in certain sections of the book, we stand behind the following excerpts as telling essential truths about life in the cabinet.*

Unlocking the Cabinet

Robert Reich provides an inside look at life in the inner sanctum

By Robert B. Reich

March 2—Washington

This afternoon, I mount a small revolution at the Labor Department. The result is chaos.

Background: My cavernous office is becoming one of those hermetically sealed, germ-free bubbles they place around children born with immune deficiencies. Whatever gets through to me is carefully sanitized. Telephone calls are prescreened, letters are filtered, memos are reviewed. Those that don't get through are diverted elsewhere. Only Tom, Kitty, and my secretary walk into the office whenever they want. All others seeking access must first be scheduled, and have a sufficient reason to take my precious germ-free time.

I'm scheduled to the teeth. Here, for example, is today's timetable:

6:45 a.m.	Leave apartment
7:10 a.m.	Arrive office
7:15 a.m.	Breakfast with MB from the Post
8:00 a.m.	Conference call with Rubin
8:30 a.m.	Daily meeting with senior staff
9:15 a.m.	Depart for Washington Hilton
9:40 a.m.	Speech to National Association of Private Industry Councils
10:15 a.m.	Meet with Joe Dear (OSHA enforcement)
11:15 a.m.	Meet with Darla Letourneau (DOL budget)
12:00	Lunch with JG from National League of Cities
1:00 p.m.	CNN interview (taped)
1:30 p.m.	Congressional leadership panel
2:15 p.m.	Congressman Ford
3:00 p.m.	NEC budget meeting at White House
4:00 p.m.	Welfare meeting at White House
5:00 p.m.	National Public Radio interview (taped)
5:45 p.m.	Conference call with mayors
6:15 p.m.	Telephone time
7:00 p.m.	Meet with Maria Echeveste (Wage and Hour)
8:00 p.m.	Kitty and Tom daily briefing
8:30 p.m.	National Alliance of Business reception
9:00 p.m.	Return to apartment

I remain in the bubble even when I'm outside the building—ushered from place to place by someone who stays in contact with the front office by cellular phone. I stay in the bubble after business hours. If I dine out, I'm driven to the destination and escorted to the front door. After dinner, I'm escorted back to the car, into the apartment building, into the elevator, and to my apartment door.

No one gives me a bath, tastes my food, or wipes my bottom—at least not yet. But in all other respects I feel like a goddamn two-year-old. Tom and Kitty insist it has to be this way. Otherwise I'd be deluged with calls, letters, meetings, other demands on my

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time, coming from all directions. People would force themselves on me, harass me, maybe even threaten me. The bubble protects me.

Tom and Kitty have hired three people to handle my daily schedule (respond to invitations, cull the ones that seem most promising, and squeeze all the current obligations into the time available), one person to ready my briefing book each evening so I can prepare for the next day's schedule, and two people to "advance" me by making sure I get where I'm supposed to be and depart on time. All of them now join Tom and Kitty as guardians of the bubble.

"How do you decide what I do and what gets through to me?" I ask Kitty.

"We have you do and see what you'd choose if you had time to examine all the options yourself—sifting through all the phone calls, letters, memos, and meeting invitations," she says simply.

"But how can you possibly *know* what I'd choose for myself?"

"Don't worry," Kitty says patiently. "We know."

They have no way of knowing. We've worked together only a few weeks. Clare and I have lived together for a quarter century and even she wouldn't know.

I trust Tom and Kitty. They share my values. I hired them because I sensed this, and everything they've done since then has confirmed it. But it's not a matter of trust.

The *real* criterion Tom and Kitty use (whether or not they know it or admit it) is their own experienced view of what a secretary of labor with my values and aspirations *should* choose to see and hear. They transmit to me through the bubble only those letters, phone calls, memoranda, people, meetings, and events which they believe *someone like me* ought to have. But if I see and hear only what "someone like me" should see and hear, no original or out-of-the-ordinary thought will ever permeate the bubble. I'll never be surprised or shocked. I'll never be forced to rethink or re-evaluate anything. I'll just lumber along, blissfully ignorant of what I *really* need to see and hear—which are things that don't merely confirm my preconceptions about the world.

I make a list of what I want them to transmit through the bubble henceforth:

1. The angriest, meanest ass-kicking letters we get from the public every week.

2. Complaints from department employees about anything.

3. Bad news about fuck-ups, large and small.

4. Ideas, ideas, ideas: from department employees, from outside academics and researchers, from average citizens. Anything that even resembles a good idea about what we should do better or differently. Don't screen out the wacky ones.

5. Anything from the President or members of Congress.

6. A random sample of calls or letters from real people outside Washington, outside government—people who aren't lawyers, investment bankers, politicians, or business consultants; people without college degrees.

7. "Town meetings" with department employees here at headquarters and in the regions. "Town meetings" in working-class and poor areas of the country. "Town meetings" in community colleges with adult students.

8. Calls and letters from business executives, including those who hate my guts. Set up meetings with some of them.

9. Lunch meetings with small groups of department employees, randomly chosen from all ranks.

10. Meetings with conservative Republicans in Congress.

I send the memo to Tom and Kitty. Then, still feeling rebellious and with nothing on my schedule for the next hour (the NEC meeting scheduled for 3:00 was canceled) I simply walk out of the bubble. I sneak out of my big office by the back entrance and start down the corridor.

I take the elevator to floors I've never visited. I wander to places in the department I've never been. I have spontaneous conversations with employees I'd never otherwise see. *Free at last.*

Kitty discovers I'm missing. It's as if the warden had discovered an escape from the state pen. The alarm is sounded: Secretary loose! Secretary escapes from bubble! Find the Secretary! Security guards are dispatched.

By now I've wandered to the farthest reaches of the building, to corridors never walked by anyone ranking higher than GS-12. I visit the mailroom, the printshop, the basement workshop.

The hour is almost up. Time to head back. But which way? I'm at the northernmost outpost of the building, in bureaucratic Siberia. I try to retrace my steps but keep coming back to the same point in the wilderness.

I'm lost.

In the end, of course, a security guard finds me and takes me back to the bubble. Kitty isn't pleased. "You shouldn't do that," she says sternly. "We were worried."

"It was good for me." I'm defiant.

"We need to know where you are." She sounds like the mother of a young juvenile delinquent.

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"Next time give me a beeper, and I'll call home to see if you need me."

"You must have someone with you. It's not safe."

"This is the Labor Department, not Bosnia."

"You might get lost."

"That's ridiculous. How in hell could someone get lost in this building?"

She knows she has me. "You'd be surprised." She smiles knowingly and heads back to her office.

April 29—Washington

"The White House wants you to go to Cleveland." Kitty is sitting next to my desk, reading from her daily list of Things to Tell the Secretary.

"Why?"

She sighs. "Because we're hitting the first hundred days of the Clinton administration and the President along with his entire cabinet are fanning out across America to celebrate, because Ohio is important, because there are a lot of blue-collar voters out there, and because you haven't been to Ohio yet."

"What'll I do out there?" I feel bullied.

Kitty is glancing through the rest of the list while she reels off the obvious. "Visit a factory, go on local TV, meet the *Plain Dealer* editorial board, plant the flag. It'll be one day. No big deal."

She is about to move to the next item on her list, when I stop her. "*Who* wants me to go to Cleveland?"

Kitty rolls her eyes. This is going to be another one of those days. When will this guy learn that he has to be a cabinet secretary? "The White House. They called this morning."

"Houses don't make phone calls. *Who* called?"

"I don't know. Someone from Cabinet Affairs. Steve somebody. I'll schedule it. Now, can we move on?" She looks back at her list.

"How *old* is Steve?"

She puts down her pad and stares blankly at me. "I have *no idea* how old he is. What *difference* does it make? They want you to go to Cleveland. You're going to Cleveland." She picks up her pad. "Now, I have a whole list—"

"I bet he's under thirty."

"He probably *is* under thirty. A large portion of the American population is under thirty. So what?"

"Don't you see? Here I am, a member of the president's cabinet, confirmed by the Senate, the head of an entire government department with eighteen thousand employees, responsible for implementing a huge number of laws and rules, charged with helping people get better jobs, and *who is telling me what to do*?" I'm working myself into a frenzy of self-righteousness. "Some twerp in the White House who has *no clue* what I'm doing in this job. Screw him. I won't go." Kitty sits patiently, waiting for the storm to pass.

But the storm has been building for weeks, and it won't pass anytime soon. Orders from twerps in the White House didn't bother me at the beginning. Now I can't stomach snotty children telling me what to do. From the point of view of the White House staff, cabinet officials are provincial governors presiding over alien, primitive territories. Anything of any importance occurs in the imperial palace, within the capital city. The provincial governors are important only in a ceremonial sense. They wear the colors and show the flag. Occasionally they are called in to get their next round of orders before being returned to their outposts. They are of course dazzled by the splendor of the court, and grateful for the chance to visit.

The White House's arrogant center is replicated on a smaller scale within every cabinet department. (The Washington hierarchy is, in fact, less like a pyramid than a Mandelbrot set, whose large-scale design is replicated within every component part, and then repeated again inside the pieces of every part.) The Labor Department's own arrogant center is located on the second floor, arrayed around my office. The twenty-somethings Tom and Kitty have assembled regard assistant secretaries with the same disdain that White House staffers have for cabinet officials. And each assistant secretary has his or her own arrogant center, whose twerps treat the heads of regional offices like provincial bumpkins.

"You'll go to Cleveland," Kitty says calmly. "The President is going to New Orleans, other cabinet members are going to other major cities. You're in Cleveland."

"I'll go *this* time." The storm isn't over, but I know I have no choice. I try to save what's left of my face. "But I'll be damned if I'm going to let them run my life."

In fairness, arrogant centers do serve legitimate purposes. They have a broader perspective than the view from any single province. And it is also occasionally true—dare I admit it even to myself?—that provincial governors go native, forgetting that their primary loyalty is to the crown, to the president, rather than to the inhabitants of the territories with whom they deal every day.

But I still hate those snotty kids.

Kitty is about to discuss the next item on her list. I interrupt again. "Next time when the White House gives me an order, find out how old he is. If he's under thirty, don't talk to me until you've checked with someone higher up."

"Yes, boss." Kitty is amused. ●

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In Congress's quest to balance the budget, the issue of tax cuts has, not surprisingly, emerged at the forefront of the debate. But as the following two articles show, not all tax cuts are created equal. Unfortunately, the reductions that politicians seem most interested in are not the ones that would provide the greatest benefit to either the economy or the majority of taxpayers. Once again, monied interests and the politicians who do their bidding have skewed the debate. Unless the public starts paying more attention to the policies that their representatives are promoting, we could all wind up as losers in the budget deal.

The Real Class War

When it comes to taxes, it's the rich against the rest of us

By Michelle Cottle

April 21, 1997, is a date that will loom large in the memory of Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers. Opening his mouth to comment on the ongoing budget negotiations, Summers promptly inserted his wingtip, remarking that the interests pushing for a cut in the estate tax were motivated by "selfishness." The deputy secretary went on to stress that "the overall tax package has to have as its thrust helping middle-class America." At the time, Summers probably assumed he was making a straightforward, albeit critical, observation about an economic policy debate. Turns out, he was fomenting class warfare.

Republican congressmen were the first to come out swinging: Within two days of Summers's remarks, Sen. Larry Craig (R-Id.) had whipped off a press release titled "Administration Says the Dead are Selfish." Newt Gingrich asserted that Summers "owes every American taxpayer an explanation for his unfair and irrational accusation." And the architect of the GOP tax plan, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Archer, decried: "It sounds like a comment that people who believe in socialism would make." Business and farm groups joined in the attack, with the head of the National Federation of Independent Business bashing Summers's remark as "pure ignorance." Just two days after his statement, Summers was forced to issue a public apology.

No matter. The fallout continued. The following week, pundit James Glassman suggested that a more accurate definition of selfishness might be "the powerful urge that compels bureaucrats to demand more and more of other people's hard-earned money." A seniors association submitted a letter to *The Washington Times*, calling for Summers to be fired for promoting "class warfare" and the tenets "of the Communist Manifesto." GOP strategist and former Reagan speechwriter Ken Khachigian lambasted Summers for displaying "a predominant view of liberals who wallow eagerly in the rhetoric of class warfare and view with socialist passion the opportunity to confiscate another's wealth."

The beating Summers took at the hands of the right isn't surprising. Conservatives love to fling around terms like "socialist" and "class warmonger" whenever someone suggests that policy makers tend to favor rich, influential special interests. And, considering President Clinton's terror of rocking the bipartisan boat, it's no shock that Summers was encouraged to endure the humiliation of a public apology. (Particularly after Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott ominously noted that he hoped Summers hadn't damaged bipartisan efforts to reach a budget agreement.) Still, from the uproar spawned by Summers's comment, you'd have thought the deputy secretary had accused the House leadership of trafficking in child pornography.

It seems, however, that Lawrence Summers violated an even more sacred taboo. By suggesting that a

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select group's selfishness was driving the estate tax debate, Summers acknowledged that all tax cuts do not benefit all Americans equally, and that class is very much the defining issue.

With our tender cultural myth about how "all men are created equal," class prerogatives are a reality few Americans like to think about—even as the affluent continue to migrate into upscale gated communities. Among the most ludicrous displays of our "classless society" delusions is the entire population's effort to classify itself as part of the mushy middle. With the gulf between rich and poor growing ever wider, identifying the middle-class American is like trying to catch a greased pig.

New York Gov. George Pataki, for example, has defined middle-class households as those making up to $175,000 a year. Similarly, Newt Gingrich claims his $171,500 House speaker's salary (and comfortable pension plan) makes him "a middle-class guy." Then, of course, there's former Rep. Fred Heineman (R-N.C.), who last year insisted that his $183,500 congressional salary and police pension put him squarely in the *lower*-middle class, while the true middle class comprises families making between $300,000 and $750,000. Now, I don't know how much folks make in Mr. Heineman's district, but last time the IRS checked, the median American income was less than $25,000. Fewer than 1 percent of U.S. households qualify for Heineman's definition of "middle class."

Only within such generous class parameters would it seem reasonable for Congress to tout as "middle-class" a budget pact that includes major reductions in both the estate tax and the capital gains tax rates. Summers's great sin, sadly, isn't that he's a socialist, but that he's the rare honest man in Washington. No matter how often Dick Armey, Bill Archer, and Trent Lott insist that these cuts are aimed at the hard-working middle class, the reality is that lowering the estate and capital gains tax rates would disproportionately benefit the wealthy. And regardless of your overall feelings about taxation, the way the rich and their political errand boys have sold their line of populist bull to the public should make the average taxpayer see red.

A Question of Distribution

A repeal or deep reduction of the capital gains tax has long been a favorite goal of the GOP. This year, congressional Republicans seized their chance to use the issue as a deal breaker in budget talks. In its June budget breakdown, the House Ways and Means Committee proposed cutting the top capgains tax rate from 28 percent to 19.8 percent. In addition, all capital gains realized from the sale of stocks, bonds, real estate, businesses, etc., that had been held for at least three years would be adjusted for inflation. Granted, this approach is less extreme than Gingrich and Co.'s dream of repealing the tax altogether, but it's still a gift to the rich. In this glorious era of bipartisanship, however, we're hearing few charges of elitism from Democrats who agreed to the budget pact. (Clinton now insists he was never "philosophically opposed" to such a cut.)

When confronted, conservatives are quick to argue that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of people benefiting from a capgains tax cut would be those in the middle class. Supporting this point, the Congressional Budget Office released a study in late May noting that a whopping 76.6 percent of U.S. families own an asset that could potentially be affected by a reduction in the capital gains tax. "It's not true...that most people who have taxable capital gains have high incomes," the report concluded. "Nearly two-thirds of tax returns reporting capital gains are filed by people whose incomes are under $50,000 a year."

Yes, but the issue is not which income group contains the most people who stand to benefit, but *which income group stands to benefit the most.* Just how large a break could all those under-$50,000-income folks expect if the GOP succeeded in repealing the capital gains tax? According to the liberal research group Citizens for Tax Justice, the average savings for the 20.7 percent of households making between $30,000 and $50,000 would be a whopping $38. The richest 1.4 percent of households, on the other hand, would enjoy an average break of $21,850 apiece. All told, three quarters of the savings would go to households making more than $200,000 a year. So who's getting the real deal here?

But think about the resulting entrepreneurial boom, croon supply-side sympathizers. If only the government wouldn't tax capital gains so heavily, more people would invest more money in new enterprises, resulting in massive job creation and economic growth.

That's a beautiful theory, and it's certainly tough to argue with encouraging new enterprise. Unfortunately, an across-the-board capgains tax cut ain't gonna make it happen. Well under 5 percent of capital gains come from investments in new businesses. Cutting the rate on *all* capgains as a way to boost investment in this one tiny area, says Brookings fellow William Gale, "is like trying to increase consumption of green vegetables by lowering the price of all food."

Besides, the IRS code already taxes capital gains from investment in start-up businesses at half the regular rate, provided an investor holds onto his stock for

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at least five years. This type of incentive, which encourages long-term investment in new enterprise, seems like the kind of tax relief growth-oriented conservatives would embrace. (For more on how to strengthen these targeted tax breaks and give entrepreneurism a real boost, see below.)

Similarly, we could establish targeted capgains breaks to address the specific needs of all those middle-income groups that conservatives claim to be serving—homeowners, small-business people, farmers. These groups already enjoy certain perks under the current system. For example, profits from the sale of certain farm and small-business assets are taxed at half the regular rate. And although Republicans are preening about their plans to give people who sell their home a $500,000 exemption on the profits, most Americans already pay zero tax on such sales; homeowners can roll over the money from the sale of their residence into a new house within two years and not pay a dime in tax (unless the house they buy costs less than the one they sold; in which case, they owe tax only on the difference). As for senior citizens who might want to sell the family homestead and move into a retirement community, RV, or swinging apartment complex on Miami Beach, people 55 and older currently receive a one-time exemption of up to $125,000 from the sale of a home.

Perhaps the most ridiculous, but nonetheless wildly popular, argument for doing away with the capgains tax is that the filthy rich have the money and know-how to set up complex tax-avoidance schemes. So because a select group of people have found a way around a particular law, we should just do away with that law? Now there's Aristotelian logic at its most twisted. (Of course, it is somewhat reminiscent of the right-wing position on gun control: "We'll never be able to get all the assault weapons off the street, so we might as well make things more equitable by allowing everybody to carry one.")

Even if you accept such logic, lowering the capital gains tax would merely exacerbate tax sheltering by the wealthy. The top capgains rate is already significantly lower than the top income tax rate of 39.6 percent. By increasing the disparity in different forms of taxation, we encourage the most affluent to restructure their finances accordingly. The rich will always manipulate the system to serve their self-interest—as, for that matter, will everyone else whenever they have the opportunity. But that's no reason to structure our tax code to facilitate the process. (How's this for a radical alternative: Close some of those tax loopholes and make certain we have an IRS that's effective enough to enforce them.)

Even the argument that a broad capgains tax cut would increase overall savings rests on shaky economic ground. For every tax analyst who concludes a rate drop would somewhat improve the nation's savings rate (Bruce Bartlett, National Center for Policy Analysis), another determines that it would have no appreciable effect—or even a negative net effect (William Gale, Brookings). As Doug Henwood notes in his new book, *Wall Street*, "the U.S., which taxes wealth and savings very lightly, has one of the lowest rates of savings and investment in the First World." So regardless of what Jack Kemp and Jude Wanniski tell you, there is no reason to expect a capgains tax cut to produce an economic renaissance. In fact, in a recent survey by *The Wall Street Journal*, most economists

A Better Way

If America really wants to get serious about economic growth, forget piddling 10 or 20 percent tax cuts on all types of capital gains. We need to stack the deck heavily in favor of new businesses by eliminating *all* capgains taxes on profits from investment in start-ups and *raising* the rates on investments less beneficial to the economy. (Of course, true ground-floor investment would need to be distinguished from Initial Public Offerings in which well-established ventures—think Netscape in 1995—issue stock to the general public.)

Under such a system, investors' rewards for taking a chance on a promising new venture would increase relative to their buying a piece of, say, IBM or General Motors. By contrast, lowering rates across-the-board actually makes other investment options proportionally more attractive.

In addition, to cut down on short-term stock swapping, the tax rate could start at 100 percent during the first year an asset was held, and decline to zero over a period of several years. This would foster the type of long-term financial commitment new businesses need, freeing them from the pressure of stockholders looking to turn a quick profit. (Those who scoff at long-term investment plans should keep in mind that they're the strategy of choice for multi-billionaire investment genius Warren Buffet—who, incidentally, has long advocated tying capgains tax rates to the length of time an asset is held.)

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predicted little or no positive effect from a cut in the capital gains tax.

Of Death and Taxes

For conservatives, an even greater challenge than claiming the capital gains tax cut is middle-class has been pitching the estate tax cut as such. Those following the Lawrence Summers brouhaha know that the term "estate tax" is *verboten* for populist tax cutters/spin artists. "Death tax" now dominates the lingo, ridding the issue of those nasty, elitist overtones. (Some estate tax abolitionists have come up with even more creative terminology: Rep. Chris Cox calls it "the grave robbers tax," and Sen. Jon Kyl has dubbed it "the grim reaper's reward.") But given that this tax affects only the fattest 1 percent of U.S. inheritances each year, in this article we're going to stick with "estate tax" and its elitist implications.

A look at the accusations leveled at Summers provides a pretty clear sense of how completely the right has succeeded in defining the estate-tax debate. Every outraged conservative from D.C. to L.A. leapt up on his or her soap box to condemn Summers for calling the dead selfish and implying that the proposed cut was for the benefit of the wealthy.

Let's address the second part of that accusation first. According to IRS figures, approximately 1 percent of all inheritances in 1995 were subject to estate taxes. All others fell below the $600,000 exemption ($1.2 for married couples) that has been in place since 1987. The tax rates start at 37 percent for estates valued at just over $600,000 and rise to 55 percent for estates over $3 million. Of the 31,564 estates subject to taxation in 1995, those valued at more than $1 million paid 95 percent of the taxes.

Ever-ready to rebut charges of elitism, estate tax opponents cry: But what about the farmers and small-business owners? As a result of such impassioned spin, it is almost impossible to find a news article on the estate tax written in the last year that doesn't bring up how the heirs of "land rich, cash poor" farmers are hit hard by the tax, often forced to sell off part of the family land in order to pay the bill. What's more, contends Senate Agriculture Chairman Richard Lugar, by breaking up farms, the estate tax threatens many rural (i.e., middle-class) communities that depend on these farms. To stop the destruction, Lugar introduced three bills in January aimed at repealing, or at least radically increasing the exemption for, estate taxes.

Indeed, every conservative politician and organization seems to have adopted an agricultural poster child to wheel out whenever the topic of estate taxes comes up. In at least three of its articles on the "death tax," for example, *The Washington Times* has featured Chester Thigpen, a Mississippi tree farmer who, after 55 years of toil, now faces an estate tax burden that may force his heirs to sell off much of the tree farm.

Chester's plight is admittedly troubling. As the price of land and farm equipment rises, more and more farmers are being pushed up against the $600,000 ceiling. So if Congress wants to raise the exemption for farms to $2.5 million, as Senator Lott has proposed, so be it. But to hold up farmers as a justification for broad-based cut or repeal of the estate tax is absurd. Less than one half of 1 percent of the value of all estate property reported in 1995 was made up of farm assets. Taxes due on these assets accounted for only 3.5 percent of estate tax revenues. Translated: We could exempt family farms from the estate tax altogether and the IRS would barely notice. But contrary to Congressman Lugar's dire warnings about the numerous farm communities being destroyed by the existing "confiscatory" tax, in 1995, only 4 percent—fewer than 1,500—of estates containing farm assets were even subject to taxation.

Similarly, stocks from family businesses account for only 6.5 percent of estate property reported in 1995, and 65 percent of the taxes due were owed by "family businesses" worth $10 million or more. Already, the executors of these estates can take up to 14 years to pay off their tax debt, with interest on the first $153,000 of the balance charged at only 4 percent.

Despite existing tax breaks for the middle class, the push to kill the estate tax has escalated in recent years. According a June 12 *New York Times* article, no less than 105 lobbying groups have joined forces to push for a major reduction. Much of the pressure certainly stems from the rising number of yuppies in line to be affected by the tax. Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that, over the next eight years, the percentage of estates subject to taxation will climb to 2.8 percent. Droves of politically powerful baby boomers are on the brink of inheriting the not-insubstantial fruits of Mom and Pop's labor—an estimated $10 trillion over the next 20 years.

In defense of these thrifty families, Ken Khachigian, writing in the May 11 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*, complained: "When the state takes your prosperity and spends it in the fashion it chooses, liberals call it good government. But when you want to keep a fair share of what you lawfully earned, it's called selfishness." Unfortunately for Khachigian's argument, by the time estate taxes become an issue, the people who lawfully earned the money aren't keeping a dime.

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They're dead. (Although technically it is the deceased's estate that is taxed, this is semantics. After all, if someone leaves his estate to charity, the inheritance isn't subject to a dime in taxation. Nor is any part of the estate bequeathed to a spouse.) If Summers's reproach of selfishness applies to anyone, it is not to frugal seniors, but to their fortunate offspring. These are the people facing taxation—on a hefty chunk of income they will receive without necessarily having done a lick of work.

If anything, passing along large estates (and that's really the only kind we're talking about here) increases the likelihood that a person's heirs will never have to work hard, take significant financial risks, or save a penny on their own. Is this any way to foster the Republicans' much-touted work ethic? Or does that particular virtue apply only to the poor? Already today's 30-, 40-, and 50-somethings are famous for their spendthrift ways. A recent study by Public Agenda found that close to 40 percent of baby boomers (ages 33-50) have saved less than $10,000 for retirement. (And lest you bemoan how impossible it is to make ends meet these days, 68 percent of those surveyed admitted they could put more away for retirement—they just don't.)

Now, I'm sure my dad would agree that I was an angelic child and a joy to raise, but I did not technically earn one penny of the money he will leave me. So why should my inherited windfall be tax free, unlike income I might actually earn?

In a piece in the May 26 *Weekly Standard*, the American Enterprise Institute's Irwin M. Stelzer raises that very question. Taking a poke at conservatives, Stelzer likens the estate tax abolition that conservatives dream about to the affirmative action that they abhor. Both, notes Stelzer, are designed to give specific groups "an unfair advantage in life's race for success." He suggests that perhaps it would be a better idea to raise the estate tax dramatically and use the additional revenue to help arrange a cut in income tax. After all, he asks: Why should people be taxed more heavily on their labor than on their fortunate birth?

Columnist George Will's prompt response: "family values." "The surest way to strengthen family structure is by encouraging an ethic of provision that will braid the generations through the loving transmission of advantages," wrote Will in a May 18 column. Similarly, the estate-tax repeal bill being sponsored by Rep. Cox and Sen. Kyl is titled "The Family Heritage Preservation Act." It seems that, for many conservatives, accumulation of wealth has become a family value. (Of course, not all rich folks agree that the best thing for children is to inherit their life's worth. Self-made billionaire Warren Buffett believes that, rather than lovingly braiding the generations, showering children with money they did not earn is a form of "food stamps" that spoils them.)

The larger economic reality is that, if the rich aren't paying their taxes, somebody else has to. The proposed GOP reduction in capital gains and estate taxes would cost the Treasury an estimated $64 billion over the next 10 years, with revenue losses during the subsequent decade ballooning to roughly (and conservatively) $250 billion. With the race on to balance the budget by 2002—ostensibly without abandoning the middle and underclass—why would congressional Republicans make their job any tougher than it has to be? Why not just offer hefty tax breaks to all of the Joe Average Americans for whom they profess such concern—and leave the rest of the capital gains and estate taxes alone?

Why not? Because when all the bull is brushed away, the heart of this debate is about the privileged class protecting its pretty privileges. This is economist Paul Krugman's "spiral of inequality" in living color: The rich, who have disproportionate political influence, alter the economic rules in their favor, which makes them richer, giving them even more political power, and on and on it goes. If this is the plutocracy the majority of Americans want—or that the minority of wealthy Americans are able to buy and con the rest of us into swallowing—so be it. But let's not couch the debate in populist rhetoric. For once, let's call a spade a spade. There may be class warfare brewing over the current tax-cut proposals—but it sure wasn't started by Lawrence Summers. ●

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The Worst Tax

How payroll taxes have hurt America's working class

BY JONATHAN ROWE AND CLIFFORD COBB

FEW SUBJECTS INSPIRE MORE TUB-thumping in Congress than the virtues of honest toil. We must eliminate welfare because people must work. We can't curb our gluttonous use of energy because—they say—it would jeopardize jobs and work. NAFTA and GATT and even capital gains tax breaks aren't boons for the very rich; no, their main purpose is to help people who work.

Yet when it comes to taxes, what's the thing Congress singles out to tax the most? That's right—work. Today work bears over 75 percent of the federal tax load; and the worst part of the work-tax system is the payroll tax, which is deducted from a worker's paycheck to provide the funds for Social Security. Unlike the income tax, which applies to all income, the payroll tax falls primarily on the wages and salaries of the working and middle class. It takes a big slice off the top of the entry-level paycheck, with no exemptions or deductions. Earnings above $65,000 a year are exempt, as is income from the stock market, real estate speculation, antiques—everything that isn't work.

Though they don't say so, when politicians bewail the federal tax burden on working folks, they are really talking about the payroll tax. It accounts for more than half the federal taxes the average American pays. The payroll tax is also a heavy burden on small businesses, the ones that create all those new jobs. Employers pay one half of workers' payroll taxes, thus the burden of this tax falls especially hard on small businesses, which tend to be labor intensive

With all the hand-wringing in Washington over oppressive tax burdens, you'd think the payroll tax would be at the top of the list. It's not. In fact, Republicans want to turn the entire tax system into an extension of the payroll tax. Their "flat-tax" plans are really work tax plans. When you exempt non-work income at the personal level (such as dividends and interest and profits from the sale of stocks, bonds, real estate, etc.), as proponents like Richard Armey, the House Majority Leader, and Steve Forbes want to do, a work tax is what's left. Reporters obediently call the proposal what spin-savvy ideologues call it, instead of what it really is. But that doesn't change the reality. Under cover of a flat rate structure, Republicans want to turn the federal income tax into a tax on the toil they rhapsodize on other days.

It would be easy to conclude, in fact, that most of official Washington doesn't even know the payroll tax exists. With an occasional exception, they never mention it; and when they do, they usually cut and run. Jack Kemp floated an idea for modest payroll tax relief through his tax reform commission last year. But by the time he was running for vice president, that was in a dumpster. Instead, Kemp and Dole were talking up a supposed 15 percent tax cut which was actually much less; include payroll taxes in the calculation—as most workers do—and the actual cut would have been more like 6 percent. (No wonder they didn't want to bring up the payroll tax.)

Why the studied avoidance? A few Democrats have spoken out, such as Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey, who did an op-ed piece on payroll tax relief in *The Washington Post* on April 15. But there's been no groundswell in the ranks. On the whole, Democrats are spooked by the Social Security connection; try to fix the way we fund the system, they fear, and opponents will accuse them of undermining it.

Republicans share that fear, of course. Republicans also like a tax that makes working people angry

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at government and at the same time lets high-income contributors off the hook. Majority Leader Armey even wanted to eliminate withholding, so we would all have to write checks to the IRS every month.

That may be sly politics, if your goal is to make people angry at Washington. But in other respects, the work-tax system, and the payroll tax in particular, is an insane penalty on work and on the employers who provide it. It says to the small business person: Give someone a job and you'll pay more taxes for your trouble.

The tax reform the country needs would not shift even more of the tax burden onto an individual's labor, as the work taxers—excuse me, "flat" taxers—want to do. That would make the worst part of the system the whole system. To the contrary, we should seek to lighten the payroll tax load on workers and employers, and to restore the balance between taxes on work and taxes on other things. Keep your pants on, Robert Bartley—that doesn't mean "soak the rich," though they certainly could pay a little more. It does mean shifting part of the tax to that which burdens the economy instead of that which moves it forward.

The best way to ensure the future of Social Security, after all, is to gear its revenue source to where the economy is going instead of where it's already been.

How We Created the Monster

There were reasons FDR started the Social Security system with a payroll tax back in the 1930s. The tax made sense at a time when the income tax was essentially a tax on wealth, and when the payroll tax itself was very low.

Up until World War II, the income tax was the part of the tax system that well-off people paid. It balanced the excises and tariffs, which fell most heavily on everyone else. The tax began as a way to finance America's entrance into the first World War. Rep. Dan V. Stephens of Nebraska was speaking for many in Congress when he said the new revenues should come from the "surplus wealth of the nation that has already been collected into private hands in abnormal proportions."

When the war ended, the U.S. tax system came about as close to progressive ideals as it ever would. Some 80 percent of personal and corporate income tax revenues came from the top 1 percent or so. Eighty-five percent of households paid no federal income tax at all (though they paid a considerable amount in excises and tariffs), and there was a widespread feeling that this was right. Henry Ford took out full-page newspaper ads proclaiming it "wise and just" to compel the very wealthy to "bear a fair share of the load which has hitherto rested all too heavily on the backs of the poor."

The basic pattern continued through the Coolidge-Hoover years of the '20s. To be sure, the Republicans softened the blow at the top. Yet through the 1920s, only about a third of the federal tax burden fell on working people, mainly in the form of excises. Over 60 percent of federal revenues came from individual and corporate income taxes, over 75 percent of which came from the richest 1 percent of the populace. Even Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, that patron saint of supply siders, acknowledged that, "The fairness of taxing more lightly income from wages, salaries, than from investment is beyond question,"

This was the tax system that the New Dealers inherited when they took over in 1932. Under pressure from populists like Huey Long, FDR tried hard to ensure that the very richest paid a fair share. He gained enactment of a wealth tax, revived the estate and gift taxes, and imposed a special tax on undistributed profits to stop the use of corporations as personal tax shelters. He raised income tax rates at the top.

In that context, Roosevelt decided to finance the Social Security system with a payroll tax. It was an add-on to an income tax system that was already aimed at the top. It also created the impression that working people would be paying their own way. In reality, Social Security wasn't entirely a "contributory" system, of course. The first wave of beneficiaries would get back more than they paid in, as would retirees with low incomes. Employers would contribute to the system too, along with workers. Most importantly, each generation of workers would support the previous one; and the early planners realized the time was coming when payroll tax contributions, at a level they deemed reasonable, would not support this load. (One Treasury analyst saw this happening by the early 1980s, and the level of tax he considered the breaking point was around 10 percent. More on that shortly.)

Some of FDR's key advisors didn't like the payroll tax approach. These included Rexford Tugwell, the Brain Truster, and Frances Perkins, the Secretary of Labor. One problem was the obvious injustice: With a payroll tax, those who made money from investments would not contribute their share. Others saw the writing on the demographic wall. In her memoirs, Ms. Perkins recalls the warning of then-Senator Hugo Black of Alabama, that the payroll tax was doomed for breakdown. "The burden on small employers and the poorest paid workers would be too great to allow of the gradual expansion of the coverage and benefits," Black had said, "unless the tax resources of the whole United States were involved from the beginning."

But FDR was adamant. He knew that Congress

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was not likely to pass a Social Security bill that looked too much like welfare. Conversely, future administrations wouldn't dare tamper with a system that people felt they had paid for out of their own paychecks, like retirement insurance. "With those taxes in there," FDR said, "no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program."

The big task was to get the system going; accounting problems could be dealt with later. The well-to-do were paying most of the income tax, so a small deduction from the weekly paycheck to support a system of retirement security didn't seem too much to ask.

Then came WWII, which threw off all the calculations. To finance the war, Congress turned the income tax into a mass tax. It cut the exemption level for low-income Americans in half; by 1948 close to 10 times as many Americans were paying federal income taxes as a decade earlier. These taxes were being withheld, along with payroll taxes. Soon the progressive rate structure, which was supposed to take away the sting, tended to become the sting, as inflation pushed working people into tax brackets originally intended for the upper-middle classes.

At the same time, the payroll tax itself was starting to explode. When the Social Security tax was first enacted in 1937 it was only 2 percent of wages and salaries. By 1960 the rate had tripled to 6 percent, which approached the upper range of what Treasury staff had thought workers could bear without needing extra compensation. By the time Ronald Reagan took office, it had more than doubled again, to 12.3 percent. (In 1917, that was the effective tax rate for Americans making today's equivalent of $500,000 a year.)

The payroll tax rate now stands at 15.3 percent, split between employers and employees. That is more than the effective income tax rate paid by all but the richest 5 percent of taxpayers in the land. A family of four today making $40,000 will pay almost twice as much in payroll taxes as income taxes. Imagine that kind of burden falling primarily upon the people who attend the $1,000-a-plate political fundraising dinners in Washington. Indignant demands for change would fill Congress the next morning. They do—but to cut the tax rate for capital gains.

The tax that burdens the people the most, concerns the politicians the least. Few issues show the political economy of Washington so starkly. Suggest a tiny increase in the income tax, and Republicans get polemical St. Vitas Dance. Perdition will be upon us; we will suffer many plagues. Yet payroll taxes have glided upward with barely a whimper of opposition.

At the beginning of the decade, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan tried to call the bluff of the Bush Administration by proposing a payroll tax cut. The Social Security Trust Fund was racking up a big surplus, and Bush was using it to mask the size of the deficit and justify a capital gains cut. This would be a blatant income transfer scheme from working people to the very rich; why not cut Social Security taxes instead? Moynihan provoked much foot-shuffling and embarrassment, but his proposal never moved. Since then, with the exceptions noted above, few have ventured even to mention the subject.

A payroll tax cut wouldn't be a threat to Social Security. It could help save Social Security by reconnecting it to a revenue stream that could actually sustain it.

Taming the Beast

There are a number of ways to support a payroll tax cut. The simplest would be to raise the individual income tax. This would spread the burden more fairly, and tax income from sources other than work. There would be built-in relief for low-wage workers, because these pay little if any tax. The effect would be a supply-side cut—a *work*-side cut for the working and middle classes, to balance off the Reagan version that was skewed heavily to the top.

Another possibility is a broad-based consumption tax. Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina once proposed a 5 percent Value Added Tax, or VAT, like the ones used commonly in Europe. The tax would have raised just over $50 billion, almost exactly the amount that Moynihan's payroll tax cut would have cost.

Another possibility is to demand a fair price for the public assets the nation has been giving away: mining rights on public lands, the broadcast spectrum, private patents derived from research the taxpayers have paid for. The broadcast spectrum alone could have raised some $70 billion. These assets are a common trust; and we could use them to supplement the Social Security fund.

We could take that concept one step further. For decades, supply-siders have been telling us that when you tax something you get less of it. Perhaps it's time to take them at their word. Instead of taxing work, why not use taxes to promote more of it?

Something along this line was what the framers of the original income tax actually intended. They drew inspiration from a journalist and self-taught economist named Henry George, whose 1879 classic, *Progress and Poverty*, sold several million copies worldwide. George focused on the distinction between natural

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assets such as land, and real capital—that is, between unearned gain and productive gain. Rising land values don't result mainly from the efforts of the owner, George observed, but rather from the enterprise of the "whole community"—streets, police, and improvements to surrounding properties.

The issue was economic as well as moral. Unearned land gains, paid ultimately by workers and entrepreneurs operate as a kind of tax—a private sector tax. They siphon off funds that could otherwise go to build the business or pay the workers. If there must be taxes they should fall first upon these unearned gains: "Well may the community...let the laborer have the full return of his labor, and the capitalist the full return of his capital," George said.

George was not a popular figure among the industrial barons of the era. A number of them funded economics departments to put the vexatious "land question" to rest. Yet his themes have persisted in the national debate. There were echoes in FDR's insistence on a connection between contribution and reward. Today, when Democrats try to restrict capital gains tax breaks to job-producing new investment they are harkening back to that same concern.

The issue even strikes a residual chord among supply-siders, the more honest ones at least. George Gilder sounds it in his best-selling *Wealth and Poverty*, the title of which is a nod to George's *Progress and Poverty*. Jack Kemp has made the connection to taxes, local ones at least. In his book *The American Renaissance*, Kemp argues that local property taxes should "fall more heavily on land, rather than, as at present, penalizing property improvements." The thought is pure George. Tax building values less and the underlying land values more, and you reduce the insane penalty—in the form of higher assessments—for people who improve their property.

But people like Kemp ought to see that the reasoning applies more broadly. If the property tax should fall more heavily on land than on the fruits of productive endeavor, for example, so too should the rest of the tax system. If the property tax shouldn't "penalize" property improvements, then neither should a payroll tax penalize the labor that creates those improvements—to the extent we can avoid it.

Start with capital gains. Any new tax breaks for these should be limited to job-creating new investment such as venture capital; there's no reason to increase the deficit to reward gains that create no new jobs or wealth.

Step two is to eliminate special tax breaks for land and natural resources. These serve no economic function; the land will still be there, with tax break or without. For intrepid political souls this could include the array of subsidies for home ownership for the well-to-do, from mortgage interest deductions to the exemption of capital gains at death. Some two-thirds of the benefit of the mortgage interest deduction goes to the richest 10 percent, which means most federal housing subsidies go to those who need them least.

Most importantly, we should stop giving away the air and water as a dump for toxic waste. You don't have to think like an economist, and believe there's a "correct price" for poisoning the nest, to agree that people should accept the consequences of their actions, and that the price system is one way to accomplish this. Polluters should pay, just as they would pay for dumping trash at a landfill. Levied as a tax on, say, energy use, such fees would help cut pollution in the most efficient way—by giving companies a big cost reason to do so. It would nudge our economy in the direction the world is moving, toward leaner and cleaner modes of production.

Steps like these could reduce a substantial portion of the payroll tax, which would be a major boost to both employers and the working poor. (Of course, rebates or other protection for the poor should be built in.)We'd have a tax system that encourages intelligence and human endeavor rather than an accretion of stuff; we'd also begin to restore the connection between action and consequence, contribution and reward, which is the moral basis of a market economy. As Winston Churchill put it early in the century, urging a tax on unearned gains from land, "Where, no service, but rather disservice, is proved, then whenever possible, the state should make a sensible difference in the taxes it is bound to impose." ●

Research assistance provided by Eric Taylor and Sam Weinstein.

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Bill and Paula

The distinction between social misbehavior and actionable misconduct

By Elizabeth Austin

When I was 16 years old, I was hanging out at a local coffee house when I suddenly realized the man standing next to me was a regionally famous folksinger. "Oh, I'm one of your biggest fans!" I burbled excitedly. "Oh yeah?" he said wearily, twitching his mustache toward me. "You want to give me a blow job?" Despite my then-imprecise understanding of that term, I comprehended enough that I burst into tears and ran blindly away. When I was 19, I got a summer job at my hometown newspaper. One of the editors there, an old guy in his thirties or forties, hoisted a few half-hearted passes in my direction. I responded with frosty monosyllables and withering glances. After a few weeks, he gave up and left me alone.

When I was 20, I was in college and working part-time at a little daily newspaper. The editor of the opinions section started commenting on my appearance and sprinkling his conversation with suggestive remarks. He continually interrupted my work, asked me out on dates, and repeatedly called me at home. This time, I took decisive legal action: I married him.

Which just goes to show that sexual harassment is a lot more complicated than Paula Jones thinks it is.

Welcome to the Excelsior Hotel

The relationships between men and women aren't always simple, and the lines between insult, harassment, and courtship can be hard to draw. Those lines have been made blurrier by our growing national desire to define everything that upsets us or hurts our feelings as cause for legal action.

If Mrs. Jones is telling the truth about her unpleasant encounter with then-Governor Clinton, and I have no reason to believe she isn't, then she had a brief but humiliating experience in a Little Rock hotel room back in 1991. By her account, she was a low-level state employee working the reception desk at a conference on quality management. Governor Clinton, who was giving a speech at the conference, walked in and made chitchat with the eye-catching 24-year-old Paula. Later that afternoon, a state trooper handed her a note from the governor, asking her to meet him in his hotel suite. Mrs. Jones says she thought getting to know the governor might help her career, so up she went.

Once in the room, Clinton took her hand and trotted out a few stale compliments about her hair and her figure. He then placed his hand on her knee and tried to kiss her neck. When this gambit proved ineffectual, she says, he pulled down his pants, exposed his penis, and asked her to kiss it. Horrified, she says, she told the governor she was "not that kind of girl." Apparently realizing his mistake, the governor hastily reassured her that he wasn't trying to force himself on her, and awkwardly offered to square things with Paula's boss if she got in trouble for leaving her post. As she left, she says, the governor asked her to keep the incident to herself.

And that's pretty much where it ended. Governor Clinton didn't press his suit further, nor did he order her fired. She claims she later felt self-conscious around her boss and worried that the governor might try to retaliate, but there's no evidence that happened. In fact, she later got several raises.

What Paula Jones is describing isn't sexual harassment. It's a horrible—although not atypical—incident of mortifying sexual insult. She was subjected to an appalling display of male sexual piggishness, and she deserves, not a jury verdict or a cash settlement, but

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a sincere public apology. If she's telling the truth, Mrs. Jones was the victim of a social crime, and social crimes demand social punishments.

Unfortunately, American society has lost the distinction between social and legal crimes. The culture of niceness and non-judgmentalism has made it socially unacceptable for us to spurn and shun men (and women) who behave abominably. When was the last time a Washington hostess closed her parlor to a Congressman who flagrantly mistreated his ex-wife? Does anyone consider dropping a rising young speechwriter from the A-list just because she snagged someone else's husband?

Pity the poor victim of a social felony. If a woman heartlessly plays fast and loose with her fiancé, trading him in for a richer, better-looking model but hanging on to his grandmother's heirloom engagement ring as a keepsake, most of their social circle will studiously try to avoid "taking sides." They'll indulge in a little psycho-babble, noting that it takes both members of a dyad to create a dysfunctional arena (or, in Oldspeak, it takes two to tango). If the jilted young man complains about his friends' lack of moral outrage, they'll recommend a good therapist and counsel him to seek speedy emotional closure. If he doesn't get over it quickly, he'll find himself sitting home alone on Friday nights while his ex-flame joins the old gang for happy hour.

What's a poor, brokenhearted young man to do–except haul the hussy into court to get the ring back, plus court costs, legal fees, and a small lump sum to ease his hurt feelings and injured pride?

Mascara and Elitism

By confusing social and legal crimes, we've lost the ability to think or speak intelligently about situations like the one Paula Jones describes. Much of the blame for this must lie with those feminists who define every unpleasant male-female interaction as a species of rape.

That's a mistake, on several counts. It's disrespectful to women who have been the targets of violent attack to consider Paula Jones a rape victim on any level. Rapists, by definition, are not dissuaded by a woman's protest that she's "not that kind of girl." But since the notion of outraged womanhood has fallen out of fashion, we lack any other explanation for the visceral revulsion we feel when Jones tells her tawdry little story.

Yet if we frame the Excelsior Hotel incident in social terms, we can talk sensibly about the issues it raises. Let's take the question of the way Mrs. Jones looks and dresses. It's considered inappropriate, and quite rightly, to ask what a rape victim was wearing when she was attacked. We don't ask whether a robbery victim was wearing an Armani suit, nor do we question whether he had a past history of philanthropy.

But Mrs. Jones was not raped; she was the target of an incomplete pass. And since social life relies on the interplay of subtle messages, verbal and non-verbal, it's not improper to point out that Paula Jones is an obvious mascara abuser. To pretend that how we look and what we wear is unrelated to social and sexual behavior is absurd. If your husband goes on a business trip and leaves his wedding ring at home, honey, he is making a fashion statement. We all use our clothes to send messages about who we are and what we want; that's why all the policy-wonk wannabes you see on the Metro dress exactly alike. Often, we use our fashion choices to send sexual signals. (Personally, I've got a black beaded number that came with a written money-back guarantee to inspire impure thoughts.) The problem is, sexy clothes broadcast your message to the masses, even if you're only interested in reaching the C-Span audience. So if Paula Jones was dressed to thrill that afternoon in the hotel, she wasn't, God forbid, asking to be raped. But she may have been sending social signals that were misunderstood by at least one observer, whose response was more enthusiastic than chivalrous, and who interpreted her presence in his hotel room as implied consent. Her visual presentation doesn't excuse his offensive behavior. But if your clothes are writing checks your personality can't cash, you're suffering from what we of the feminist elite call "cognitive dissonance."

That's why it's not elitist to look at Anita Hill and Paula Jones differently. Obviously, getting an unrequested look at a man's private parts (distinctive or not) is way more disgusting than listening to your boss make smirking remarks about porno flicks. But when we look at Ms. Hill, it's clear from the way she presents herself publicly that she's not sending sexually inviting messages to the male world at large. And that's not a function of socioeconomic class. Having spent much of my childhood in my mother's tiny southern hometown, I am here to tell you that there's no mistaking a working-class Baptist church lady for a honky-tonk honey, even at a distance of 100 yards. Is bright red lipstick an invitation to violent sexual assault? No way. Is it an invitation to a possibly unwelcome compliment about your luscious lips? Absolutely.

Carville the Cad

As we've lost the ability to discuss nonverbal social signals without cries of "Stop blaming the victim," so have we forfeited the vocabulary to describe the Clinton camp's attacks on Mrs. Jones's virtue. Even those

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of us who believe that Clinton's reputed zipper problems don't automatically make him unfit for public office are repulsed by comments such as James Carville's sneer, "Drag $100 through a trailer camp and there's no telling what you'll find."

Here we have the flip side of the social vs. legal crime conundrum. Jones's supporters hold that if a sexual encounter was unpleasant, it must therefore be legally actionable. Clinton's backers seem to take the view that misogyny is perfectly acceptable if its target uses lots of hair spray. If all the rumors about President Clinton's womanizing are false, then I apologize. But if it's true, as his biographer claims, that Clinton's former gubernatorial chief of staff Betsey Wright sat down with the young governor in 1988 to discuss damage control of possible "bimbo eruptions"—public statements by his bevy of former sexual partners—then I am appalled, by both of them. Did no one in Clinton's inner circle consider his private behavior towards women important, apart from its possible effect on his political career? Didn't anyone take the trouble to pin his ears back, to point out the incongruity between publicly espousing feminist causes and privately rolling around indiscriminately in the bed of a pickup truck? Again, there's that cognitive dissonance thing.

Clinton's opponents would like to put the Paula Jones affair on the same level as Watergate and Teapot Dome, and that's just plain wrong. Even if the incident happened just as she says it did, it sounds like it was private, legal (albeit disgusting) behavior. But Clinton's supporters need to be reminded that just because it was legal doesn't make it right. Paula Jones may have lots of hair and a down-market accent, but that shouldn't subject her to private viewings by state officials. I suspect Mr. Carville would use very different terms to describe the Paula Jones incident if it had involved Mary Matalin. Sir, that was no bimbo; it could have been your wife.

Tort vs. Tart

Our confusion of social and legal crime has made it impossible to talk sensibly about any issue involving men and women. Intuitively, we know there's a difference between a presidential candidate who poses for a snapshot with a blonde on his lap and a high-ranking soldier who conducts a discreet affair during a marital separation, but our legalistic view of social behavior makes it hard to explain just where that distinction lies. Resurrecting social crime and punishment would give us the means to acknowledge the subtle gradations of human behavior that the court system was not set up to recognize. The legal definition of adultery can't discriminate between Hepburn and Tracy and Hart and Rice, but we can—and we should.

Of course, that will require more than another slew of pompous pro-monogamy think pieces. If we're serious about clearing the courts of unnecessary litigation, we'll all have to take back some responsibility for social law enforcement. That means we'll have to be chilly toward that charming guy who's refusing to pay his brilliant son's college tuition, on the grounds that his new young wife's kids take all his money. It means we'll have to stop returning the phone calls of that amusing and professionally useful young woman who brags about exploiting a sprained ankle to get a "handicapped" parking sticker. It means we'll have to take on some of the messy, unpleasant interpersonal stuff we've so gladly turfed over to the courts.

This may seem like Victorian nostalgia—and to a certain extent, it is. We don't need to embrace 19th-century standards of female chastity and public homophobia to appreciate the effectiveness with which Victorian society could punish social misbehavior—and the way it could also temper its social judgments with mercy. Perhaps what we need in the coming century is a neo-Victorianism, a shared willingness to define social rights and wrongs, and a shared responsibility to enforce those standards in our own lives.

We can start by taking a new look at the Paula Jones lawsuit and the issues it raises. If her allegations are all lies, then we need to exact a social price as well as a legal one. If she's lying, then shame on her, shame on the unscrupulous partisans who are promoting her, shame on the talk-show hosts who will try to exploit her inevitable public confession for ratings gains, and shame on the magazine editors who will feverishly bid for the exclusive *Paula Jones: Why I Lied* book excerpt. Shame on them all for insulting every woman who's ever truly been harassed at work, for misleading every voter who tries to balance private conduct with public views, for coldheartedly trying to disrupt the political process of a great democracy.

But if she's telling the truth, then shame on Bill Clinton, and on everyone who failed to remind him that the rules apply to him too. If she's telling the truth, he's not a rapist. He's not even a harasser. He's just a man who didn't quite comprehend that some of us still take sexual insults rather seriously. And if Paula Jones is telling the truth, and all of this embarrassment, humiliation, and national distress are what it takes to wring an apology out of him, then Bill Clinton is getting what he richly deserves.

Next time, Mr. President, just say you're sorry. ●

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Republican Hypocrites

GOP budget cutters are hawks—until it comes to trimming their own pork

BY ERIKA NIEDOWSKI

IN MARCH, 11 RANK-AND-FILE HOUSE Republicans—the kind with revolution running through their veins—bolted their party to defeat a measure increasing committee budgets by more than $20 million. At the time, Oklahoma sophomore Steve Largent said the vote was a matter of fiscal conscience. Mark Souder of Indiana declared that Republicans hadn't been sent to Washington to increase spending. And Arizona's Matt Salmon claimed that the dissenting group, which included Lindsey Graham and Bob Inglis of South Carolina, wanted to "inject some courage" into the Republican leadership. "The GOP," he insisted, "must resist the temptation to return to the tax-and-spend ways of the Democrats."

What these budget-balancing cops on Capitol Hill didn't say, though, was that they too had recently asked the federal government for hundreds of millions of dollars for parochial projects—in essence, for the very pork they have consistently paraded against. Indeed, only one month earlier, Salmon had requested $130 million from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for a light-rail line in his district, while Souder had sought $122 million for highways. Rep. Peter Hoekstra, another defector, put in for $594 million for his constituents in western Michigan. And Graham and Inglis, who once compared deficit spending to alcohol dependency, asked the chairman of the Interior subcommittee of Appropriations to quadruple President Clinton's budget request for an upstate conservation project to $6 million.

If these were the most conspicuous ideological flip-flops, they were not the most brazen. A month after the vote, former Seattle Seahawks football star Steve "fiscal conscience" Largent, who chastised Speaker Newt Gingrich for backing off tax cuts during budget negotiations, endorsed a tax increase on licensed sportswear and souvenirs to pay for a new Seahawks stadium. What was normally taboo for the congressman suddenly became for the Hall of Fame receiver "an innovative solution to a tough funding problem."

Of course, pork-barrel spending and fiscal hypocrisy are as old as the legislative branch itself: Abraham Lincoln spent much of his single term in the House trying to finagle money for river and harbor projects in Illinois. And, more recently, when Democrats were in power, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Byrd diverted $1 billion to West Virginia in less than two years, including $75 million to rebuild a radio telescope. But this GOP Congress was supposed to be different. When Republicans took control of the House in 1994, for the first time in four decades, Gingrich announced that the federal government was going on a diet. The historic change, he wrote in his Contract with America, meant the end of government that is "too big" and "too easy with the public's money."

Yet now, even as Republicans celebrate the balanced budget agreement they reached with President Clinton in May, some are already gorging on pork. Sen. Phil Gramm, who denounced the budget plan and his party for not cutting spending enough, introduced a $16 million program to combat fire ants in Texas. And Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi—who won $1.3 billion in 1995 for a helicopter carrier ship the Navy hadn't requested—reportedly threatened the Navy with retribution earlier this year for not finding a shipbuilding contract for his hometown yard. Even a supplemental appropriations bill to provide emergency relief to flood victims nationwide this spring was polluted with pork: $21 million for, among other things, an alternative fuel shuttle bus

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fleet at Yosemite National Park; $12.6 million for completion of the William H. Natcher Bridge in Kentucky (named after the frugal former congressman); $2.5 million for digital maps in California's San Joaquin Valley; and $250,000 to replace salmon fry killed during an April snowstorm in New England.

One of the most glaring symbols of the revolutionaries' abandonment of their fiscal fanaticism is the Tennessee Valley Authority, the New Deal-era agency that, after 60 years, still enjoys an annual $100 million federal subsidy for its non-power operations. This appropriation—for flood control, navigation maintenance, and land management—has repeatedly been targeted for elimination by Rep. John Kasich, the obsessive deficit-trimming head of the House Budget Committee. The conservative Heritage Foundation also wants to sell the agency off. Even TVA's own chairman, Craven Crowell, announced earlier this year a plan to sever the agency's financial ties to the federal government by fiscal year 1999, saying it would help reduce the deficit.

But lawmakers from the seven-state Southeastern region serviced by TVA—including hard-line House and Senate opponents of the New Deal—balked. A testy Zach Wamp of Tennessee, one of last year's 73 GOP lieutenants, defended TVA to appropriators as "an asset owned by all Americans," and devised a plan to protect its subsidy indefinitely. His classmate, Ed Whitfield of Kentucky, where TVA oversees the recreation area Land of the Lakes, attacked Crowell. And Tennessee's normally fiscally conservative senators, Fred Thompson and Bill Frist, reverted to stalling tactics, asking the General Accounting Office and congressional committees to study the issue. After weeks of pummeling, Crowell finally reversed himself and said he would support federal funding for now. GOP Rep. Scott Klug of Wisconsin, who introduced an amendment last year to kill TVA's appropriation, observes: "We passed a welfare reform bill that essentially told people that they had to stand on their own feet after two years. How can anybody with a straight face make the argument that TVA needs another 60?"

Yet plenty of Republicans are making this kind of argument—and not just about TVA. Overall, since the GOP revolution began amid the fanfare of fiscal conservatism in 1995, the watchdog group Citizens Against Government Waste has identified nearly $27 billion in pork-barrel projects. Even traditionally pro-Republican groups are getting restless: Analysts at the Heritage Foundation released a report in March ridiculing $100 billion in "corporate welfare," and the conservative *Weekly Standard* depicted a bewildered elephant on its cover in June with the heading, "The Clueless GOP."

All this pork drains the federal Treasury largely for parochial rather than national interests; and it's rich with hypocrisy. But the real problem is that, at a time when GOP deficit-trimmers are saving money by slashing social programs, they are pilfering from a smaller pot. So $16 million to fight fire ants could be $16 million for public education or food stamps. "If people protect special projects and interests," says Arizona Sen. John McCain, a renowned Republican porkbuster, "then it's hard for them to have credibility when we have to make reductions in certain social programs." Nor are liberal Democrats without blame. While touting themselves as the party of the poor, they too are pickpocketing the federal purse for old-fashioned pork. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle recently handed over $2.7 million for the animal resource wing at South Dakota State University—his alma mater.

The Politics of Pork

If there was a turning point for the radical revolutionaries of 1994, it was the elections of 1996. Wary that Democrats would regain House control after only two years in the minority, re-election-conscious Republicans returned to one of the oldest means of winning votes: buying them. *The Wall Street Journal* reported last year that Newt Gingrich sent a memo to appropriators urging them to give special consideration to projects requested by their vulnerable freshmen. As a result, Phil English of Pennsylvania won $3.3 million for courthouse construction in his hometown of Erie, while Frank Riggs of California got $3.4 million for energy and water projects and another $1.4 million for local buses. Meanwhile, Gingrich—an avid science-education advocate and admirer of dinosaurs—earmarked $13 million in the Veterans Administration/Housing and Urban Development bill for the Museum of Natural History in New York. A bipartisan team of House porkbusters stripped it from the bill, but $8 million reappeared in the conference report. "It's like David against Goliath," says a House Democratic aide who scours appropriations bills for such things.

In total, lawmakers of both parties brought home $14.5 billion in bacon in the 1996 election year—a 16 percent increase over the previous year, according to the *1997 Congressional Pig Book*, published by Citizens Against Government Waste. Granted, some of the 13 annual appropriations bills, including Foreign Operations, Defense, and Transportation, contained scaled-

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back pork. But in others, like the Treasury/Postal bill, pork ballooned as much as 122 percent from 1995, CAGW said.

This year, things may only get worse. As tax revenues swell and the ardor of the GOP die-hards diminishes, what began as only a few pieces of pork appears to be turning into a whole roast pig. One of the largest troughs in town is the House Transportation Committee, charged with divvying up as much as $175 billion for roads, bridges and rail systems in every state for the next six years. It is no coincidence that the already-swollen panel has grown to 73 members, making it the largest committee in congressional history. Not surprisingly, most of its newcomers are those Republican and Democratic freshmen who won narrowly in 1996, and are hoping a federal check for a local cause will help shore up their base in 1998. The panel has received a record 1,500 project requests from about 90 percent of House lawmakers—even from members like Rep. Salmon, who supports devolution of spending authority to the states, and GOP sophomore Mark Neumann, who says of earmarking, "Don't do it, but if you do, just be fair to Wisconsin." According to *The Washington Post*, of the 84 House lawmakers who were elected with 55 percent of the vote or less and who supported the balanced budget in May, half also voted for the $12 billion in additional transportation spending that nearly derailed the plan. "It's 95 percent pork," contends Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy at the CATO Institute, a conservative think tank. "Are there some legitimate highway demonstration projects? Maybe five or six a year." Adds Republican Rep. Ray LaHood of Illinois, who claims he never came to Congress to abolish bacon anyway, "Of course it's pork."

And the 1998 appropriations process has barely even begun.

Deep Denial

The first sign of an addiction, of course, is denying you have one. "I don't see it as [pork]," explained Rep. Inglis of his $6 million request for land acquisition in South Carolina. (Instead, it's a "unique opportunity.") "These are good projects, not pork," declared then-Illinois freshman Michael Patrick Flanagan, referring to $25 million that was earmarked for Chicago waterfront repairs and transit projects during his unsuccessful re-election campaign last year. "I don't think we ought to perceive everyone who has a need in their district as lining up at the trough," contended Georgia sophomore Bob Barr, who supports the new $198 million F-22 fighter planes being built at taxpayers' expense in his district.

Indeed, GOP lawmakers staunchly defend their projects as essential investments, often in the name of national security or sound infrastructure. In some instances, they have a case. Florida Sen. Connie Mack, for example, who is fighting the practice of transportation earmarks, shot off a letter to Senate Commerce Committee Chairman McCain in April protesting staff cuts at the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables and the closure of the National Weather Service's southern headquarters. "Emergency planners in my state—and even some of the staff at the National Weather Service—are worried that these changes could result in loss of life and property in Florida and throughout the Southeast," the senator wrote.

He could be right. But even the revolutionaries have learned that draping pork in the cloak of the country's national defense is often the easiest way to protect it. That's how Gingrich justifies his plug for the F-22—it's mere coincidence that 1,100 assembly workers in his native Marietta, Ga., depend on its construction for their livelihood.

Another time-tested trick is to share the pork-barrel high. In the case of the B-2 bomber, construction contracts are sprinkled throughout congressional districts all across the country—literally. Still, in other instances, projects are slipped in simply to feed a pork-junkie's lonely craving: like the time House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston of Louisiana secured nearly $1 billion in the 1995 defense bill for an amphibious landing ship that once again, the Navy hadn't even asked for; or when the hawkish chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Pete Domenici, won a $17.1 million appropriation last year for advanced laser research and logistics administration facilities at two military bases in New Mexico. "It's gone from tragedy to parody," says McCain.

Nevertheless, Republicans insist they're successfully shrinking the deficit and bringing the budget into balance. "We are winning the war," says Rep. Neumann, "even though we're losing some of the skirmishes." Of course, Neumann can't afford to criticize lost "skirmishes" in the battle against pork: It just so happens that the co-chairman of the Congressional Porkbusters Coalition inserted language into the 1995 defense bill that barred companies using foreign parts from bidding on generators for certain navy submarines—language that just so happened to infuriate the Navy, and just so happened to benefit one of the largest employers in his district. ●

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Tidbits & Outrages

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

A group of parents in Brigham, Utah, plan to sue a local school board and kindergarten teacher for promoting same-sex marriage during a class game of "Farmer in the Dell," by allowing little girls to play both the role of "the farmer" and "the farmer's wife."

One for the road

All along Interstate 93 in New Hampshire are road signs reminding motorists, "New Hampshire State Liquor is open at the next rest stop."

It's me or the Marlboro Man

Morris Stahl of Swissvale, Pennsylvania, is paying $300 a month to rent a billboard urging his wife to quit smoking.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Our Lady of the Turnstile

Over 2,000 visitors an hour are flocking to a Mexico City metro station to see the "Subway Virgin"—an image of Mary that appeared in a water stain on the station's floor.

One of those Kodak Moments

Police in southern California were able to apprehend and convict a flasher, using snapshots taken by a woman to whom the assailant had exposed himself. After photographing the offending act itself, the woman had also taken a picture of his license plate as he tried to run her over with his van.

Try explaining this one to Allstate

Motorist David Antinowicz was knocked unconscious when a raccoon leapt from a passing garbage truck and crashed through his windshield.

Sorry, Barbie, Ken has a new friend now

A New York toy company has already sold 25,000 copies of its new 13-inch anatomically correct "Billy the Gay Doll."

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The Man Behind the Curtain

Richard Mellon Scaife—and $200 million of his money—is the man behind the conservative revolution

BY NURITH C. AIZENMAN

OIL AND BANKING HEIR RICHARD Mellon Scaife comes from a long line of philanthropists. Granduncle Andrew donated his extensive art collection to the American people, and built the National Gallery in Washington to house it. Mother Sarah favored health care and education. As for Richard, he has continued the family tradition—with a twist. Scaife is one of the biggest, and in all likelihood *the* biggest, financier of right-wing causes in America.

Much of the money Scaife inherited from his Mellon ancestors has gone to the campaigns of individual politicians. But Scaife has gotten the biggest bang for his buck by using his vast personal fortune, estimated at about $870 million, to promote conservative thought.

Scaife is certainly not the only one behind the rise of the conservative movement, but he has been a key figure. Over the past 30 years, Scaife has disbursed over $200 million to right wing causes through his three foundations, the Carthage Foundation, the Allegheny Foundation, and the Sarah Scaife Foundation. Name a major right-wing institution and the odds are that Scaife is a principal funder. In 1995 alone Scaife gave out a total of about $20 million to conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation (over $1.5 million), the American Enterprise Institute ($465,000), the CATO Institute ($100,000), the Manhattan Institute ($125,000), and the Center for Strategic and International Studies ($485,000). He supported conservative media outlets such as National Empowerment Television, run by Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation ($720,000) and *The American Spectator* ($700,000)—the folks who brought us David Brock's attack on Anita Hill and the Troopergate stories. Scaife also promotes conservative thought on college campuses through organizations like the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Inc. ($325,000 in 1996), which funds conservative student newspapers. He's the man behind groups like the Landmark Legal Foundation ($275,000 in 1995), which files ethics complaints against Democrats in Congress, and helps defend Republicans. And Scaife is the main backer of the media machine that disseminates videos and articles on Clinton "conspiracies" like the "murder" of Vince Foster. The articles themselves often originate in *The Tribune-Review*, a newspaper Scaife publishes in his hometown of Pittsburgh and neighboring Greensburg.

While less immediate than the pay-off from direct political involvement, the result of Scaife's funding campaign has been far more profound. "Scaife played an absolutely fundamental role in the development of the New Right," says Thomas Ferguson, a political science professor at the University of Massachusetts who studies the conservative movement. Slowly but surely, Scaife helped create a new political and intellectual establishment which has, in turn, increasingly shifted American politics toward a repudiation of the New Deal and the Great Society. Regardless of the status of Republicans' political fortunes, the success of Scaife's effort is clear: When a Democratic president feels compelled to declare in his State of the Union address that "the era of big government is over," and when the debate focuses not on whether, but on how to dismantle the welfare system, there can be no doubt that conservatives have gained significant ground in the battle over the nation's agenda. And it is not much of

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of an exaggeration to say that the story of their rise is the story of Scaife's funding strategy.

Mellon Man

Despite his tremendous power, most Americans would have a hard time picking Scaife out of a lineup, let alone describing his views. And Scaife clearly wants to keep it that way. He shuns the public eye and almost never speaks to reporters. (He declined to be interviewed for this article.) Many of his acquaintances are equally cagey: Scaife's reputation for reclusiveness is surpassed only by his reputation for vindictiveness. Those who have crossed him say they've paid the price. A former family friend who testified against Scaife at his divorce hearing charged that Scaife retaliated by pressuring her boss to fire her. She sued Scaife and the matter was finally settled out of court, with Scaife paying an undisclosed sum to her favorite charity. Scaife's lawyer, Yale Gutnick, calls the woman's accusation "hogwash."

Nor are journalists immune. Nearly ten years after George Crile wrote a piece in this magazine that portrayed Scaife and one of his newspapers in a negative light, Scaife financed the libel suit brought against Crile for a CBS documentary he had produced on General William Westmoreland. In 1981, when journalist Karen Rothmyer tried to interview Scaife for a piece in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, she says she was treated to a foul-mouthed tirade: "You fucking Communist cunt, get out of here!" Scaife allegedly shouted.

Scaife, who was treated for alcoholism during a visit to the Betty Ford Center in the mid-1980s, is now "on a more even keel," maintains Gutnick. And Dennis Casey, a political consultant who works for Scaife, describes him as a "caring" and "humorous" man who served as a pillar of support to Casey's family when Casey suffered a heart attack. Still, Scaife's newspaper, peppered with personal attacks against his enemies, hardly suggests newfound restraint.

Scaife is the great-grandson of Judge Thomas Mellon, the founder of the Mellon family's banking and oil empire. But despite the hundreds of millions this pedigree has brought him, Scaife, who is reportedly angry at the way his uncle Richard K. Mellon consigned his father to a minor role in the family business, has rejected his Mellon roots. He has dropped the "Mellon" in his own name, and even went so far as to order it removed from the titles of both the foundation and the Pittsburgh museum wing named after his mother, Sarah Mellon Scaife.

Scaife was equally cool toward the banking trade favored by many of his relatives. Instead, from his earliest days growing up just east of Pittsburgh on the expansive grounds of his family's Westmoreland County estate, Scaife showed a keen interest in politics and media. As a child, he was an avid collector of newspapers. "He had a little rack in his room where you could stack the papers and see their titles—like a magazine stand," remembers his older sister Cordelia May. "If I went out of town, I'd always bring him back an out-of-state paper."

Scaife's interest in politics really took off in the late 1950s, under the tutelage of Robert Duggan, a close childhood friend of Cordelia's. Duggan encouraged Scaife to become active in the Republican party and brought him on as campaign treasurer in his own bid for elected office. In 1963, after Duggan was elected District Attorney of Pittsburgh—an area not known for its affection toward the GOP—he quickly emerged as a promising young star of Pennsylvania politics, with Scaife as his top advisor.

Duggan was considerably to the right of other Pittsburgh Republicans. He gained notoriety when he had three of the community's most respected obstetricians arrested for performing abortions at the local hospital, and quickly alienated more moderate Republicans like Scaife's uncle Richard K. Mellon. That suited Scaife just fine.

For years Scaife maintained strong ties to his political mentor. Duggan became Cordelia's personal lawyer—as well as her on-and-off boyfriend. Scaife considered him "like a brother-in-law." But in 1970, in the first of many breaks with close friends and associates that would characterize Scaife's life, his relationship with Duggan took a dramatic downward turn. Scaife was tipped off by a fellow businessman that Duggan was under investigation for taking mob payoffs. Initially, Scaife opposed the federal inquiry. But when he was confronted with hard evidence of Duggan's corruption, according to Richard Thornburgh, then the U.S. Attorney handling the case, "Scaife turned on [Duggan] with a vengeance." Scaife resigned as Duggan's campaign finance chair and directed Cordelia to cut him off as well. Cordelia not only refused but, in 1973, foiled prosecutors' plans to question her about Duggan's finances by eloping with him to Nevada.

Four months later, on the same day he was indicted on federal corruption charges, Duggan was found on the grounds of his home—dead of a gunshot wound. Authorities ruled it a suicide, but in a striking parallel to the Vince Foster case—which Scaife was to become obsessed with years later—questions about the real cause of Duggan's death churned through the local gossip mill: Why were there no fin-

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gerprints on the shotgun found near Duggan's body? How could he have reached the gun's trigger? Who might Duggan have implicated if he had had a chance to speak to the feds? To this day, many Pennsylvanians believe Duggan was murdered. Cordelia May is reportedly one. She never forgave Scaife for deserting her husband, and Scaife never forgave her for going against his orders. The two have not spoken for more than 20 years.

But if Scaife abandoned Duggan, he did not give up on Republican politics. At first his support took the more traditional form of financial contributions to political campaigns. Scaife backed Barry Goldwater in 1964. And H. R. Haldeman's diary entries indicate that Richard Nixon counted Scaife among the "fat-cats" upon whose generosity he could rely. Scaife's largesse bought him direct access to those in power. In 1970 he was one of 16 guests at a stag dinner aboard Nixon's yacht Sequoia—one of a number of intimate gatherings with the president at which Scaife was urged to open his wallet. Scaife usually complied. In 1972 he gave Nixon's Committee to Re-elect the President over $1 million—parceled out in 334 checks for about $3,000 each to avoid gift taxes. This made him Nixon's second largest contributor. Scaife also coughed up an additional $47,500 for Nixon's illegal "Townhouse" slush fund. When the Associated Press revealed his Nixon contributions, Scaife responded by cancelling his newspaper's account with the service and ordering that its wire machines be removed from the newsroom that very night.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Richard M. Scaife in 1982.

This was hardly the only time Scaife used his newspaper to punish enemies or reward friends. When Nixon ran for re-election, Scaife made the *Tribune-Review*'s staff destroy any pictures of the president in which he was not smiling. After Spiro Agnew stepped down, a *Tribune-Review* reporter who exulted "one down, one to go" was promptly fired. Scaife has said the reporter was axed for other reasons, but, according to the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the *Tribune-Review*'s editor and nearly half the news staff resigned in protest.

Scaife's management style was received more favorably in political circles. As described by Katharine Graham in her recently published memoir, one of the strategies considered by the Nixon administration as the Watergate scandal unfolded was to muzzle the *The Washington Post* by convincing Scaife to take it over. Writes Graham: "The evidence [discovered by reporter Nicholas Lemann] in the Nixon Archives was [John] Erhlichmann's notes on a December 1, 1972, meeting he had with Nixon: 'Post. Scaife will offer to buy it.'"

Nevertheless, like Duggan, Nixon was ultimately to prove a disappointment to Scaife. Several months before Nixon stepped down, when the evidence of his malfeasance became too great for even Scaife to ignore, the *Tribune-Review* called for his resignation. One former *Tribune-Review* reporter who was friendly with Scaife recalls chatting with him about the Nixon years. "I got the sense he felt burnt by Nixon." Several acquaintances speculate that the experience marked a turning point: "After Nixon, Scaife made a point of investing in the [conservative] ideology rather than individual candidates," says the former *Tribune-Review* reporter. Whether or not Nixon was the catalyst, there is no doubt that by the early 1970s, Scaife had embarked on a bold new course of philanthropy.

The Rise—and Rise—of the Right

Surveying the political scene of the early 1960s, Scaife must have been dismayed at the lack of intellectual support for his right-wing views. Mainstream political thought was largely the province of the left. The nation's most respected and influential universities, think tanks, publications, legal activists, and, with a few exceptions, political thinkers, were all more or less purveyors of the New Deal philosophy that government can and should intervene to protect individuals from the vagaries of the free market. Anyone who disagreed was generally assumed to have a low IQ. In the 1950s the conventional wisdom was that if you were intelligent you were for Adlai Stevenson. Conservatives, proclaimed Lionel Trilling, didn't have ideas, merely "irritable mental gestures." A decade and a half later, the term "conservative intellectual" was still widely regarded as an oxymoron.

The lack of a countervailing structure to challenge the philosophy of the left had a direct impact on national policy. While Republican politicians regularly lambasted Democrats during elections, once in office they drew from the same pool of ideas as their

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Democratic counterparts. Even Scaife's pal Nixon, hardly your average lefty, accepted the New Deal's central tenet. It was Nixon, after all, who established the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Then, in the early 1970s, two emerging trends combined to radically alter the landscape. The first was the rise of a new class of conservative thinkers. It began with a few lone voices in the wilderness. As early as the 1940s, Nobel prize-winning economist—and libertarian hero—Friedrich Hayek sent ripples through academia with his conservative manifesto, *The Road to Serfdom*. The 1950s saw further rumblings with the publication of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* and William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*. Soon afterwards, Buckley founded the *National Review*. But the turning point came in the late 1960s, when disillusioned leftists like Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, and Nathan Glazer defected to the conservative side. These "neo-conservatives" warned that the Great Society had promised more than it could deliver and was rife with unintended consequences. They had a valid point. And because they were bona fide members of the intellectual elite, their counterparts in the Establishment couldn't simply dismiss them as right-wing dimwits. As a result, the neo-cons lent a new respectability to the conservative movement.

At around the same time, Richard Scaife and other like-minded deep pockets began using their money to advance their anti-government agenda. Ironically, their inspiration came from the left. Until then, the Fords and Carnegies of America had, for the most part, been content to deposit their wealth in large foundations and stand placidly by as executive boards disbursed it to liberal causes. But the rise of new liberal groups like Nader's Raiders caused a sea change. Conservatives were alarmed—and intrigued—by the Raiders' success in rallying the public and policy makers in favor of increased industry regulation. In a widely circulated memo, attorney Lewis F. Powell (who later became a Supreme Court Justice), expressed the concern of many on the right that, beyond radicalizing the young, Nader's groups had fomented "the hostility of respectable liberals and social reformers. It is the sum total of their views and influence which could indeed fatally weaken or destroy the [capitalist] system." The answer, according to Powell and others, was to appropriate Nader's tactics and launch a counter-offensive which would oppose the anti-business groups not just in the courts, but in the wider arena of public opinion and political thought. Wealthy right-wing philanthropists were the key to getting this strategy off the ground.

Along with other big players like the Adolph Coors Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Scaife provided the money to build nothing less than a parallel network which could match the liberal Establishment tit for tat. For every Ralph Nader organization, he financed a pro-business legal group; for every Brookings Institution, he gave the seed money for a Heritage Foundation; for every Kennedy School at Harvard, he funded a Hoover Institution at Stanford; for every Arthur Schlesinger he promoted a Milton Friedman.

By the 1980s, the new conservative network was a force to be reckoned with. A 1981 *Washington Post* article attempting to describe it required a full page to list the 70-odd groups involved. Liberals suddenly found themselves out-funded and—just as importantly—outmaneuvered. The conservatives took a far more aggressive approach to peddling their philosophy. For instance, in contrast to the sober academic style often used by their colleagues at the Brookings Institution, writers at the new right-wing think tanks tended to produce jargon-free studies dotted with easy to follow subheads and couriered free of charge to reporters on deadline. They sent out editorials and commentary tapes to newspapers and radio stations across the country. And they urged their fellows to get out of the office and forge alliances with politicians in Washington.

Many of the new think tanks were manned with neo-conservatives. But the neo-cons' originally legitimate critique of government intervention was soon parlayed into a justification for laissez-faire policies that clearly favored the rich. The neo-cons appeared unperturbed by this usurpation. Irving Kristol, for instance, was only too happy to let Jude Wanniski plug his supply-side fantasies in Kristol's *Public Interest*—to which Scaife gave about $400,000 between 1977 and 1982. And if Kristol was taking Wanniski seriously, who could blame Ronald Reagan for following suit?

The election of Reagan—a personal friend of Scaife's—ushered in a new era of conservative dominance. When Reagan entered the White House he brought in more than the New Right's philosophy, he brought in the *philosophes* themselves. Many of them came from organizations generously supported by Scaife. Attorney General Edwin Meese's Institute for Contemporary Studies—dedicated to stamping out rent control and the minimum wage—relied on Scaife for its primary funding. So did the Mountain States Legal Fund from whence Secretary of the Interior James Watt came.

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But the ascent of these Reaganites was merely a harbinger of the rightward shift to come. By the early 1990s, the conservative network had produced a new generation of thinkers and activists who took the ideas of their intellectual predecessors one step further. Among the most influential were Charles Murray, Myron Magnet, Dinesh D'Souza, Marvin Olasky, James Q. Wilson, and William Bennett. In a spate of best-selling books—often funded by the foundations Scaife supported—these thinkers provided a radically new analysis of the welfare system. Not only did government assistance fail to help the poor, the conservatives now argued, it was actually part of the problem—fostering a skewed value system which encouraged young girls to have children out of wedlock and eroded their work ethic. The key to getting people off welfare—and in fact, the only compassionate thing to do—was to change their attitude by holding them more accountable. There is, to be sure, some truth in this assertion. Neo-liberals writing in this magazine

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

A new height in chutzpah may have been attained by a Washington journalist who, on a recent television talk show, nodded in solemn agreement with a prominent columnist's denunciation of **Clinton**'s moral character. It just so happens that the journalist and the prominent columnist were rumored to have carried on a torrid, adulterous affair a few years back. Do they think they've gotten an indulgence from **William Cohen**?

They're saying **Madeleine Albright** may be the strongest secretary of state since **Henry Kissinger**. **Sandy Berger**, whose job as national security adviser makes him her natural rival, is said to be biding his time waiting for her to make mistakes. One may have come in Holland, when she infuriated some of **Bill Clinton**'s pals by stealing headlines from her boss with a dramatic speech about Bosnian war criminals on the same day the president was trying to get press attention visiting the same country.

Elizabeth Drew's *Whatever It Takes* tells about the enormous influence wielded by someone most of us never heard of. His name, and I love it, is **Grover Norquist**. Even more fascinating is the decor of his office, which features, according to Drew, "pictures of Norquist carrying guns—an AK-47 in Afghanistan and an assault rifle in Angola. He keeps a shotgun in a closet."

Last year the office was the scene of a fundraiser Norquist gave for his pal **Randy Tate**, who was in a losing race for re-election to Congress and is now slated to replace **Ralph Reed** as head of the Christian Coalition.

"**Alexis Herman** made a living out of playing the race card" was just one of the interesting quotes *The New Yorker*'s **Peter J. Beyer** elicited from **Ron Brown**'s close friend, **Nolanda Hill**. Of **Vernon Jordan**, Ms. Hill observed, "His rainbow coalition starts and stops with Vernon Jordan." Of her late friend she observed, "You've got to remember Ron Brown had been, in every sense of the word, a bagman as an attorney. ...He did backroom deal-making." Of Brown's death, she said, "It spared him a great deal of humiliation. He might have gone to jail, and he knew that."

If you're a woman who has ever tried to fend off the advances of an adulterous male—or even if you're an adulterous male who remembers how nice ladies tried to tactfully evade your clutches—you will be haunted by what **Paula Jones** says about her attempt to deflect our president's alleged approach: "I was trying to talk to him about **Hillary**."

A lot of attention is being paid to *The Hill*, a new rival to *Roll Call* in covering Congress. The reason: *The Hill*'s revelations about the illegal contributions received by **Rep. Dan Burton**, who is in charge of the House investigation into naughty money from abroad. Other stories by *Roll Call* and *The Washington Post*'s **Charles R. Babcock** confirm that Burton may, to put it as gently as we can, not be the ideal choice to lead the tainted-money investigation.

Former White House staffer **Mark Middleton** assures us that he has "no information about criminal misconduct by others," meaning that the White House has no need to be nervous—as we suggested in last month's "Who's Who"—about his agreement to

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have been making some of the same points for years. And by the time Clinton was elected on a promise to "end welfare as we know it," a national consensus about the need for welfare reform had emerged. The trouble is that the conservative reforms that were subsequently passed completely ignore important concerns—like the lack of child care, training, and jobs available to people whose benefits are being cut.

As the welfare issue illustrates, the ideological movement Scaife helped nurture frequently raises reasonable concerns about liberal policies, only to advocate solutions that veer too far in the *opposite* direction. But an even more destructive tendency has been the movement's focus on gaining political power even at the expense of national well-being. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the debate over health care reform.

At the start of Clinton's first term there was genuine agreement among Republicans and Democrats that health care reform was badly needed. A rare spirit of compromise reigned over the Hill. When Hillary Clinton presented her health care proposals to congressional committees, they greeted her with standing ovations.

Enter Republican Representative Newt Gingrich and conservative activist Bill Kristol. Then the minority whip, Gingrich had spent much of the previous decade laying the groundwork for a Republican takeover of Congress. His plan was to move the GOP away from the moderate conservatism of the Bush/Dole crowd (which still held sway in Congress), towards a conservative philosophy that would more sharply differentiate Republicans from Democrats. A crucial element of Gingrich's effort was to use his political organization, GOPAC, to identify like-minded candidates and provide them with the ideological and logistical support they needed to win office. Scaife was naturally a big backer—donating $60,000 to GOPAC between 1989 and 1995. And by funding National Empowerment Television, which broadcasted Gingrich's "Renewing American Civilization" course and the Gingrich-hosted "Progress Report," Scaife made it possible for Gingrich to reach 11 million American homes.

By the early '90s, a sizable number of congressional Republicans looked to Gingrich as their patron saint, eagerly absorbing his words of wisdom. Gingrich's message was as cynical as it was blunt: The way to power was through conflict not compromise. If you cooperate with Clinton, you hand him a political victory. So forget about health care reform and

"cooperate" with **Ken Starr**.

When **Robert Kennedy** decided to run for president in 1968, **Lyndon Johnson** summoned him to the White House for a tongue lashing. After Kennedy left, Johnson settled back to listen to a secret tape recording he thought had been made of the event. But according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s **Dorothy Rabinowitz**, all LBJ heard were buzzing sounds. It seems that Kennedy had been sufficiently wary to equip himself with a scrambling device that foiled Johnson's taping apparatus.

This magazine cannot be counted among the fans of **Ronald Reagan**'s presidency. But now and then we loved him. One example was that great speech in Normandy. Another was his memorable challenge in Berlin: "Mr. **Gorbachev**, tear down this wall." The authorship of that line is now in dispute. Reagan White House insiders credit **Peter M. Robinson**, one of Reagan's writers at the time. Others say the author was **John Kornblum**, now assistant secretary of state and ambassador-designate to Germany. *The Washington Post*'s **Al Kamen**, says that White House officials who worked on the speech have told him, "The State Department kept arguing that **Helmut Kohl** would be embarrassed, that it was crude anti-communism," a line that we must say is even more credible than Paula's about Hillary.

When administration officials are trying to persuade **Jesse Helms** to be reasonable, we're told they rely on a retired admiral named **James "Bud" Nance**, who is a top Helms aide, to talk sense to the senator.

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focus on the real goal—winning control of Congress.

Republican activist Bill Kristol played a key role in reinforcing this attitude. The son of neo-conservative godfather—and longtime Scaife beneficiary—Irving Kristol, the junior Kristol had cut his political teeth under the guidance of then-Secretary of Education William Bennett, yet another recipient of Scaife funds. Soon after Clinton's election, Kristol started the Project for the Republican Future to translate conservative ideas into hard-nosed political tactics. From his spartan offices, Kristol began faxing memo upon memo to Republican lawmakers, urging them to obstruct Clinton's reform effort in order to win the next election.

Together, Kristol and Gingrich succeeded in convincing the Republicans to kill the Clinton health care plan. The strategy paid off. In November 1994, the GOP swept into both houses. Scaife's contribution to this victory did not go unacknowledged. "Scaife," gushed Gingrich in a speech he gave just days after the election, was one of the people "who really...created modern conservatism."

Poisoned Pen

While Scaife's role in the broad realm of national policy has necessarily been more diffuse, there's one area in which his impact has been direct: his campaign to keep the Clinton conspiracy rumors alive. Scaife is particularly obsessed with Vince Foster's death—which he's called "the Rosetta Stone to the whole Clinton administration." Although his media empire is a small potatoes affair, consisting of a few local dailies and a radio station, Scaife has employed it in his Foster crusade to great effect. His main paper, *The Tribune-Review*, has published dozens of stories casting doubt on the authorities' claim that Foster committed suicide. The bulk of these articles are written by journalist Christopher Ruddy, who's credited with such "scoops" as the since-disproved charge that Foster shared a secret apartment in Virginia with other administration officials. Ruddy's reporting proved too over-the-top for even the *New York Post*; but Scaife was more than eager to snap him up when the *Post* let him go.

Ruddy's pieces reach an audience well beyond the *Tribune-Review*'s readership thanks to the Scaife-funded Western Journalism Center (WJC), which reprints his articles in full-page ads it buys in mainstream papers like *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. In 1995 Scaife gave $230,000 to the WJC. He also gave $175,000 to the National Taxpayers Union, which has hired "experts" to dispute the authenticity of Foster's suicide note and produced a widely circulated video entitled "Unanswered: The Death of Vince Foster." Accuracy in the Media is another Scaife beneficiary, netting $355,000 from Scaife in 1995. Its founder, Reed Irvine, produced a series called "The Other Side," which focused on Clinton scandals and aired on the Scaife-funded National Empowerment Television. Among Irvine's theories: Vince Foster was lured into a "sex trap" from which he fled to the park where his body was found.

The various groups Scaife funds tend to borrow heavily from one another's "research." With each recycling, a rumor gains credibility, until it is picked up by Republican politicians or foreign papers, and eventually makes its way into the mainstream press. Last March, Scaife's promotion of Clinton scandal stories earned him a bout of unwanted media attention when the Clinton administration released a 331-page paper tracing the "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce." The report cast Scaife in a starring role as the "wizard behind the curtain" of the Foster conspiracy machine.

Scaife's lawyer, Yale Gutnick says Scaife's interest in Foster stems from his "passion for the truth. ...All he wants is for the truth to come out." That may be; however Scaife's passion has not extended to probing the ethical dalliances of say, Newt Gingrich. An equally strong motivation, then, may be his right-wing agenda, combined with an attraction to conspiracies. A number of Scaife acquaintances have described his keen interest in cloak-and-dagger tales, and one former *Tribune-Review* reporter remembers having long discussions with Scaife about the mob: "He was just fascinated by it."

Meanwhile, Scaife continues to add new conservative institutions to his Christmas list. He recently gave over $1 million to Pepperdine University toward the establishment of a "School of Social Policy," intended to be another right-wing answer to Harvard's Kennedy School. Scaife was once again dragged into the public eye when independent counsel Kenneth Starr announced that, upon completing his investigation of Clinton, he would become dean of the Pepperdine school. Editorial writers quickly seized on the conflict of interest posed by Scaife's funding of Starr's next job. Scaife retorted that he had had no say in Starr's selection for the post.

But the point is, he didn't need any. By hand-picking the universities, thinkers, activists, media outlets, and politicians he funds, Scaife can rest assured that an intelligent—and well-financed—army of supporters will do their utmost to carry out his agenda. Over 15 years ago, former Scaife employee Pat Minarcin relayed to the *Columbia Journalism Review* a conversation he had had with Scaife. Minarcin had asked Scaife whether he thought money was power. "Scaife paused three or four seconds and looked at me really hard," Minarcin recalled. "And then said, 'I didn't used to think so, but the older I get, the more I do.'" ●

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The NATO Mistake

Expansion for all the wrong reasons

BY JONATHAN DEAN

THIS JULY, THE 16 LEADERS OF THE North Atlantic Treaty Organization's member nations will convene in Madrid for a special summit meeting. In between the customary public photo-ops and back room shmoozing, they will take a bold and unprecedented step: this year they will formally invite at least three, and possibly five, Eastern European countries to begin the process of joining the NATO club. The invitation of former Warsaw pact nations to join the very alliance they had opposed for four decades will mark a watershed event in NATO's history. But what is really remarkable is that almost no one thinks it is a good idea. The Eastern European countries are only interested in entering NATO insofar as doing so integrates them into Western Europe; their real preference would have been membership in the European Union. The Western European NATO members are, for the most part, following the United States' lead. Thus responsibility for NATO expansion falls squarely with the Clinton administration. Without the administration's continual pressure on the American bureaucracy and on the European NATO states, the project would have died a natural death in the NATO Council.

Clinton has yet to articulate a single reason for his drive to expand NATO that is compelling enough to override its clear downside. But ever since Clinton's 1994 announcement that "the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members, but when and how," it has become increasingly difficult to turn back. And once adopted, a big multilateral project like NATO enlargement tends to take on a life of its own; it is tough to stop because doing so would be very costly to the prestige of governments that have supported it.

But why did the Clinton administration push for NATO expansion in the first place?

Misreading History

The administration's first mistake was its misapplication of historical analogy, which led it to harbor an exaggerated fear of Russia's threat to European security and to believe that a weak Eastern Europe must inevitably elicit aggressive behavior from both Russia and Germany. For one thing, administration analysts overlooked the far-reaching changes that have taken place in Germany. And they misread the future prospects for Russia. In short, the administration fell victim to what philosopher Karl Popper called historicism, a process that converts distinctive historical events into general laws of historical inevitability ruling future policy.

Of course, administration officials never actually came out and declared that their intention was to counter future Russian aggression. They knew that revealing such an analysis of the future would precipitate an immediate crisis. Consequently, the disease for which NATO enlargement was to be the remedy was never fully diagnosed in public. Instead, fear of Russian aggression as a motive for NATO enlargement was translated into a bland desire to promote democracy in Eastern Europe—a goal which the Western countries were already supporting with other programs. The explanation for enlarging NATO most frequently stated by the Clinton administration officials was "instability" in Eastern Europe. In a March 1995 *Foreign Affairs* article, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke claimed political instability of the newly established democracies of Eastern Europe as the main grounds for rapid Western action to bolster them. In an article written 18 months earlier, Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler and Stephen Larrabee, three Rand Corpora-

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tion analysts who played a central role in selling NATO enlargement within the administration, argued that East-Central Europe was littered with "potential mini-Weimar republics" who were "experiencing a wave of instability and conflict generated by virulent nationalism."

Yet the argument that NATO must expand rapidly to save tottering Eastern European democracies was and is far from compelling. There was conflict and instability in former Yugoslavia, but by 1995, when the NATO enlargement project went into full gear, this was being contained by NATO forces. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, who were the main candidates for NATO membership, were not perfect democracies. However, they had democratic constitutions. Most had had two or even three nationwide free elections. All were making progress in free market economies.

Meanwhile, the missing part of the argument for NATO enlargement—the reason why administration leaders believed the project was urgent—was obvious to everyone: Russia. Russia's leader, Boris Yeltsin, an unhealthy alcoholic, had used artillery against his own parliament in October 1993. In late 1993, the supporters of democracy and reform were reduced to a minority of 25 percent in Duma elections that brought in a majority of communists and extreme nationalists. There was fighting in the republics surrounding Russia, in most cases involving Russian forces. In December 1994, the Russian military entered Chechnya in a bloody, brutal attempt to end secession.

Many administration analysts concluded from these developments that Russia would collapse, sending streams of refugees westward or, more likely, that it would become involved in a new European war. A single sentence of his *Foreign Affairs* article reveals Holbrooke's underlying concern: "And for Germany and Russia," instability in Central and Eastern Europe "has historically been a major contribution to aggressive behavior." In other words, World War III would have the same genesis as World Wars I and II, the tendency of two large imperialistic countries to expand at the cost of weak neighbors between them.

Administration analysts had made a wholly pessimistic analysis of the future of Russia (and of Germany as well) and had decided that Eastern Europe must be saved from possible aggression by Western action while there was still time. As the reference to Weimar revealed, NATO enlargement was for them a mental recreation of the struggle with Hitler—moved eastward. NATO enlargement was a panicked administration reaction to a potential crisis which, if it had any real existence, had passed after the Russian military was defeated in Chechnya, Russia had the common sense to make peace, Yeltsin was re-elected in free elections in 1995, and then survived serious heart surgery.

Of course, Russia still has its dangers, but it is lumbering on toward a rough democracy and a crude capitalism. The chance for a positive outcome is there in the long run. And even if the analysis of possible future conflict with Russia were correct, the administration's method of isolating Russia outside an expanding NATO was and is the wrong way to deal with the problem.

A Substitute for Action

The second reason for the administration's drive to expand NATO was its conviction that doing so would preserve NATO's (and consequently the United States's) key role in Europe while allowing the United States to avoid intervention in Bosnia. Again, this calculation backfired.

With the end of the cold war, the Clinton administration was keenly concerned about America's position in Europe. After nearly half a century of playing the dominant role in European security, the U.S. role seemed at an end. How could American influence in Europe be maintained? The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe was too weak a structure. There, the U.S. was only one of 53 members, without the primacy it had in NATO from the outset. The transatlantic structure of liaison with the European Union was also still too weak. So it had to be NATO.

But NATO was in trouble. Since mid-1991, conflict had raged in former Yugoslavia. However, following the example of the Bush administration's decision not to intervene in Yugoslavia, Clinton held back. In the meanwhile, public criticism of NATO mounted both in the U.S. and Europe. Here was the world's most powerful military alliance, victorious in the cold war, whose forces were still costing over $200 billion a year, reorganized and ready for a fight, but standing on the sidelines while some of its own soldiers were being humiliated by armed Serb and Croat bands as a result of the restrictions of a neutral role under UN command.

Sen. Bob Dole said NATO's absence from Bosnia conveyed the impression that the NATO alliance had outlived its usefulness. NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner said that failure to handle the Bosnia crisis would seriously damage NATO. In a

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much noted speech in June 1993, Senator Lugar argued that, "NATO had to go out of area (western Europe) or out of business." In an article published at the time of the January 1994 summit, Secretary of State Warren Christopher declared that "a NATO that does not adapt itself to the new security challenges facing Europe risks being pulled apart by the centrifugal forces of apathy and parsimony as budget-conscious governments in the West respond to an increasingly skeptical public." Secretary Christopher had laid out a primary motive for NATO enlargement: there was a real risk that NATO would be brought low if it did not remain relevant to Europe's security problems. In the administration's analysis, if NATO went into decline, so would U.S. leadership in Europe. If, in turn, NATO could not act in Bosnia because of the administration's own self-imposed strictures, then let it at least justify itself by extending its membership eastward. NATO enlargement was a bureaucratic response to institutional crisis.

There is great irony in the fact that NATO enlargement was undertaken as a kind of bureaucratic surrogate for NATO involvement in Bosnia. If the Clinton administration had come earlier to the overdue decision to intervene in Bosnia, the world would then have seen, as it did two and a half years later when Clinton finally did step in, that NATO continued to have a valuable function. The need to justify NATO by eastward expansion would have been subsumed in the drama of Bosnia, and the enlargement project might never have been advanced as a serious administration program.

Finally, in sponsoring NATO enlargement, the Clinton administration had an obvious partisan political motive. In the presidential race with Sen. Bob Dole, Dole was absolutely sure to criticize the administration for inaction on international security issues, especially NATO, exploiting President Clinton's vulnerabilities from his lack of military experience and his opposition to the Vietnam War. In particular, NATO enlargement was of direct interest to Polish and Eastern European voters in key areas of the Midwest. Faced by this possible attack, the Clinton administration preempted it and took the subject of NATO enlargement as its own cause. President Clinton's only foreign policy speech of the 1996 presidential campaign was on the NATO issue; it was given in Detroit in October 1996. Senator Dole's subsequent charge that the administration was not doing enough for NATO enlargement had no impact.

What Next?

NATO remains an indispensable organization for coordinating the security policy of the world's richest and most powerful countries in North America and Europe. It should be retained. NATO's capacity for organizing peacekeeping missions, attested in Bosnia, should also be retained. Moreover, there is a residual need for NATO as a defensive alliance to insure against possible Russian misbehavior. But, as the miserable performance of the Russian military in Chechnya showed, it will take a decade or more before Russia's conventional forces can become any threat to far-superior NATO. Now, the main risks and dangers from Russia are in the nuclear field. But the U.S. is in a position to deal with these risks bilaterally, preferably through further mutual disarmament. There is no need to enlarge NATO for this purpose.

Of course, now that it has embarked on a policy of NATO expansion, it will be tough for the United States to pull back. But if Clinton wants to avoid the trap fallen into by previous presidents like Lyndon Johnson—who, for fear of losing face, failed to pull out of Vietnam even when it became apparent that the United States was losing the war—Clinton should take the courageous step of placing NATO enlargement on hold while an alternative is considered. This alternative would consist of an improved Partnership for Peace program, already underway, of the Charter relationship between Russia and NATO, recently signed in Paris, and of return to enlargement of the European Union as the main means of integrating Eastern European countries into Western Europe. Negotiations for enlargement of the European Union are beginning. They will take a long time to come to fruition. But there is plenty of time for them. Despite the administration's claims, there is no crisis in Eastern Europe.

If, despite the fact that this alternative program represents a safer, more constructive course, invitations for a first group of candidate states are extended in July this year and the enlargement is, in fact, ratified by the legislatures of the 16 NATO countries, the administration should do some serious homework. It should develop a credible, detailed, 20-year program for the admission to NATO of all eligible European states, including Russia. This approach should provide realistic prospects of NATO membership to excluded candidates like the Baltic States and to Ukraine. It would give time for the Russian polity to settle down while keeping open a convincing, real prospect that NATO will ultimately become a truly all-European organization for European security.

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American authors from Mark Twain to Allen Drury, from Henry Adams to Gore Vidal, have tried to write The Great Washington Novel. This long literary quest has produced scores of books, ranging from pretty damn good to just plain awful, from very nearly accurate to recklessly false—but none has quite managed to get over the barrier that separates accuracy from truth.

This may be the case in part because so many Washington novels have been written by journalists; good reporters, after all, tend to be so focused on accuracy and so confined by deadlines that they are never quite comfortable with the freedom offered by the longer, looser-jointed, imagination-driven form of the novel.

Whatever the reason, there has never been a great work of fiction about Washington. But a new novel published last month strongly suggests that at least one American writer is capable of going a long way towards remedying that.

Ward Just has written a dozen novels, many short stories, and hundreds of newspaper and magazine reports. He started as a journalist—he was a skilled and courageous reporter for Newsweek *and* The Washington Post*—but he kicked the habit almost 30 years ago and has been writing fiction ever since. Many of his novels have been first rate, but the new one,* Echo House, *is by far his best to date. And it comes closer than any other to being that endangered literary species, The Great Washington Novel. The excerpts that follow illustrate Just's success in aiming for an elusive target, and in the process capturing the truth, rather than mere facts, about Washington's 20th-century culture.*

TALES OF THE CITY

Ward Just's new novel provides a window on Washington

BY WARD JUST

RETURNING TO HIS OFFICE EACH DAY after lunch, Axel leafed through his messages. They were his link to the world and he always returned them in order of receipt, no exceptions, not even the President. He swiveled his chair so that he could see out the big window into Farragut Square, talking into the telephone while he watched people go about their ordinary business, hurrying to a doctor's appointment, waiting for a bus, buying a hat. His conversations on the telephone affected them mightily, usually in ways they would never understand. So Axel observed them carefully as they hurried or strolled, looking into store windows while they waited for the light to change. At these moments, seated behind his father's old desk, disposing of the messages, Axel thought of himself as a builder of bridges.

He saw his chores literally as bridges, elaborate spans of iron and cable soaring into the sky as gracefully as a hawk in flight. A bridge took you from one frontier to another. Axel identified with the agile and imperturbable New York Indians, the Mohawk who balanced on the footwide beams, a thousand feet to the treacherous river below. Such work called for more than brawn and an inactive imagination. It called for strength of character and the sort of nerves that were wired into the genes, not learned or acquired but present from birth. Such men were not afraid to look down, but seldom bothered, because their eyes were

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fixed on the work at hand, and when their attention wandered they looked skyward to the heavens. *Ad astra per aspera.*

Their work was done in the clouds, hidden from view. If you were successful, your labor and the elegance with which you went about it were noticed only by your fellow aerialists, those who shared the heights. The danger was a given. And the danger was not the point. The bridge was the point, and the applause, when it came, would never be heard by the spectators below. That was its value.

A Place Where Anyone Can Play

"They don't forgive in New York. New York's tribal, it never changes. As long as you belong to the tribe you're at the top of the tree. You're there today and there tomorrow unless you go broke or go to jail. And your parents are there and your cousins and someone new comes to town and it takes a generation before their foot fits the slipper. The New York squires don't like Southerners, Westerners, or Jews. They particularly don't like Washingtonians, because we're the competition and anyone can play. Win an election, get nominated to a cabinet post—and there you are; you're in the game. We don't care who you are or where you come from because we're a city in motion." He paused. New York was a spoiled, conceited city run by gangsters and the plutocracy; and its offspring, Chicago and Los Angeles, were no better. Chicago was much worse. "An outsider makes a mistake in New York and they cut his nuts off. ...We don't practice nepotism, the bank vice presidency or the seat on the Stock Exchanges or the partnership in the law firm. You can't hand down political power. If you're a senator or a Secretary of the Treasury you can't leave that to your son in your will. He has to make it on his own. And he will, if he's careful in his choice of friends.

Order of Battle

Constance insisted on setting her table personally, the flatware, the crystal, the china, the candelabra, the flowers, all situated just so on creamy Irish linen. She attended to the chore with the energy and enthusiasm of a general preparing the battlefield, and indeed that was how she saw herself and saw the after-hours life of the capital. She believed that tables were the terrain of the common struggle. Life flourished on flat surfaces, desks, conference tables, lecterns, dinner tables, an indoor world, and as the general paid particular attention to his forward battalions, his artillery support and reserves and logistics, so Constance was concerned with the precedence of chairmen, which senator was across the table from which lobbyist, who was at her own elbow. ...

Of course the table glittered, but it had a businesslike quality as well, a commercial environment where practical conversation could flourish. She took special care with the placement of the candelabra, in that way encouraging cross-table conversation. Enfilade, the generals would have called it. Constance thought the number 12 was just about right. That was the largest number that could be conveniently assembled within the range of one man's voice.

Camelot...

By the autumn of 1962 Washington was no longer just another glum city of government, like Albany or Sacramento. Instead, it was fabulous—though not yet fabulous on the scale of Venice at the end of the 15th century or brainy Vienna on the eve of World War I. Any nation's golden age was most vivid at the moment of irreversible political declines, and in late 1962 Washington was at its most muscular and confident. The Russians had been humiliated in Cuba, and the young President was now seen not as a novice out of his depth but as a statesman of charm, subtlety, integrity, and tact. In private moments he spoke alarmingly of a long twilight struggle with the Bolsheviks; but that was not seen as evidence of pessimism or exhaustion but of an attractive worldliness, a newly mature American statecraft on the model of Whitehall or the Quai d'Orsay. Certainly there was no evidence of decline; quite the reverse. In such fine weather no one would think to listen for the scrape of the keel on the shoals. ...

Suddenly every Democrat wanted to be in Washington, indisputably the epicenter of American life. Civic-minded industrialists, university professors, foundation executives, writers, provincial politicians, lawyers beyond count, settled in sociable Georgetown or Cleveland Park as the American émigrés to Paris 40 years before gathered in the quarters of the Left Bank, charmed by the natives, avid to absorb the culture. They arrived in station wagons from Cambridge or Ann Arbor with their wives and children, settling in as if they never intended to leave—a logical assumption, since there was every prospect of a 16 or 24-year dynasty, so long as they did their work with competence and élan, and learned the language of government, indeed married the language of government to the language of the boardroom, the courtroom, the faculty lounge, and the newsroom. They thought of themselves as the permanent civil service that would supervise the long twilight struggle. There came to be

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a kind of syncopation to the capital, jazz rhythms to the press conferences and glittering White House evenings, as the big cats prowled and did their business, and then went reluctantly home.

...and Watergate

By 1973 Sylvia was back in Washington. ...She wondered whether she could smell the corruption in Washington, actually *smell* it, like onions or sweat or brimstone. ...The city was much changed from the leisurely capital of the prewar and postwar years, busier, larger, and somehow more settled, certainly more aware of itself and much, much richer. ...

No one could keep the details straight, but it was obvious that something somewhere was fishy and that Nixon was responsible; and then the tapes came to light.

They've got him now, Willy said. They've got his actual language, the language of a race-baiting roughneck. And that will become the issue. He's finished. Washington cannot abide the common speech, the words that people actually use, the petty evasions and nuance and exaggeration and resentment and hatred of the other. They want all Presidents to talk like Lincoln or John F. Kennedy. They want words you can chisel in marble.

He's let them down, you see. Just as they knew he always would.

Poor bastard; they'll ride him out of town on a rail. ...

Watergate seemed such a simple matter and suddenly it wasn't simple. One scandal followed another. Courageous, brilliant reporting and disinterested, creative editing would bring Nixon down at last. The presidency itself was in the balance—yet the commotion was threatening the stability of the government, straining the fragile threads that bound the leaders to the led. This was an unintended consequence, Washington itself on trial. Someone had to put a stop to it; otherwise—

He is destroying himself, they said. Will he destroy us as well? Nixon himself was a cancer on the community.

Getting the Right Lawyer: Not always the Visible

I thought it would be better to have someone more visible, someone who'd make the senators sit up a little straighter, pay attention to the proceedings, treat you with respect, because maybe, sometime in the future, *they'd* need help from Mr. Visible. A dubious campaign contribution, sexual mischief, a grand jury summons, malfeasance or misconduct, the usual petty blackmail or extortion. At that time it's mighty handy to have Mr. Clifford or Mr. Williams on your side, explaining things. I thought I could use some of that distinction and weight. But Axel argued that that was precisely the wrong approach, because the Washington Visibles come with a reputation and an entourage. Word goes around that they've been retained; it's a bullhorn to the goddamned press: Wait a minute, this is serious, there's something nasty afoot, perhaps something embarrassing to the government, perhaps to the President.

Clifford or Williams guarantees publicity and sometimes that's what the client needs. Sometimes you want to try the case in the press because you sure as hell don't want to try it in front of a jury or judge, or the Select Committee on Intelligence. But that wasn't what we wanted. Axel didn't want it and I guess I didn't want it either. My superiors didn't want it. ...

And the truth is, you can always rent a Visible for an hour to make a telephone call and explain what the situation really is as opposed to what it appears to be. These proceedings are always political and therefore it's a question of point of view. It has nothing to do with law and nothing to do with ethics. It has to do with optics. The lawyer's job is to make certain that everyone understands that there's more than one point of view, each with its own primary colors. The Visibles are experts at building up one and tearing down the other. My Botticelli is superior to your Picasso, that figure with two noses and three eyes and a hole in her stomach. They aren't lawyers, really. They're opticians, each with his own eye chart.

The Venerables

The old men seemed to exist as a rebuke, relics of the empire that had mastered the Depression and fought a two-front war, in which all able-bodied men participated, as opposed to departing for Sweden or declaring themselves homosexual or sheltering in law school or faking murmurs of the heart, and still had resources left over to rehabilitate the nations of Europe and Asia while defending them against the Stalinist scourge; and at that critical moment managed to assemble the most talented cohort of public servants since the Founding Fathers, men who were poor when they entered government and poor when they left it, often with damaged reputations, owing to the recklessness of Senator McCarthy.

And the Venerables were not shy about reminding everyone what Washington had been and what it had become, a self-infatuated money-grubbing iron

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triangle of stupefying vulgarity, vainglory, egotism, and greed, worse than Rome because at least in Rome there was lively sexual license, orgies and the like. These people wouldn't know an orgy if it patted them on the ass and said, Please. The present-day crowd along with their unspeakable arrogance were intolerant. They were sanctimonious. They were puritans. They were budget-cutters, cheap Charlies.

This estimate of the nation's capital at the turn of the millennium did not go unchallenged. To younger Washingtonians the opinions of the old men seemed anecdotal, dated, nostalgic, and partial, a loud fart from another time altogether, more unreliable cold war propaganda. They not only had their own stories about what Stalin had told Chip and what Chip had told George and what George had said to Tommy and what Tommy had told the President; they had their fathers' stories about what the President had told Cohen and what Cohen had told Corcoran and what Corcoran had said to Frankfurter and what Frankfurter did. All very well and good, but weren't these more ghosts from the past come to terrorize the present? There was another way to look at it, and that was that these most talented public servants since the Founding Fathers, with their admirable modesty and high intelligence, had bankrupted the nation fighting foolish unwinnable wars and encouraging dubious insurgencies, all because of what Stalin had told Chip and what Chip had said to George, et cetera. And they had declined to levy the taxes needed to pay for the installation of the New Enlightenment, their American Century. And when the Russian empire had reached its megalomaniacal limit, it collapsed. Even so feckless an operator as Mikhail Gorbachev had brought it to its knees; and now it existed as a collection of impoverished semi-feudal states, with grotesque arsenals of nuclear weapons, wholly dependent on the forbearance and generosity of the West, and all thanks to the paranoia of Chip, Tommy, and George, and to that list you could add Harry, Ike, Joe, Edgar, Foster, Jack, Bobby, Dean, Allen, Bob, Mac, Lyndon, and Hubert, not to mention the unindicted co-conspirator Richard Milhous Nixon, who had poisoned the well for a generation, nearly destroying the nation's fragile faith in its political processes. Hell, yes, the country was in a sorry way, and Washington sorrier still. The Treasury was empty. And as for Nam—could it not be humanely said that the true victims were those obliged to dodge and weave to save their skins, nobly refusing to be led like lambs to the killing fields? Victims, yes—and heroes, too, answering a higher call. ●

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Why We Needed Welfare Reform

Instead of debunking the welfare myth, David Zucchino has proved it true

By Jason DeParle

THE MYTH OF THE WELFARE QUEEN: A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist's portrait of women on the line
By David Zucchino
Scribner's, $25

As the welfare debate captivated Congress in the summer of 1995, David Zucchino, a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, struck out from the newsroom and immersed himself in the lives of several of the city's most disadvantaged families. His goal was to question the welfare myths that held sway in official Washington, where "few of the senators and congressmen who voted for the welfare bill had ever met a person on welfare." Zucchino is a talented reporter and a graceful writer, and he returned after six months on the street with a lucid, even gripping, account of daily life among the poorest segment of the welfare population. His characters stride across the pages trying to deal with any number of predicaments, including murders, house fires, asthma attacks, rampaging rats, and a stranger-than-fiction Christmas dinner staged by a mobster trying to court community goodwill.

There's just one problem: The characters don't really debunk the "myths" about underclass life, as the author seems to believe. Indeed, with each tragic twist of their unfortunate lives, they seem to ratify the very stereotypes that drive the political debate. With little attachment to work or marriage, they produce an abundance of children they cannot support, often with the indignant expectation of a welfare check. Had the book been available during the congressional debate, Newt Gingrich himself might have stood on the House floor, reading it aloud. When a skilled reporter, drenched in sympathy for the poor, produces such an inadvertently damning document, it's not hard to see why the welfare abolitionists won the epochal debate. If the status quo hadn't become indefensible, it certainly appeared that way.

The book weaves two unrelated stories. The first chronicles the tribulations of 56-year-old Odessa Williams, a long-suffering, large-hearted woman doing her level best to care for an ever-expanding clan that includes eight children, 32 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Born in Georgia to sharecropper parents, Odessa spent her childhood picking crops and migrated north after marrying a sharecropper herself at the age of 15. The marriage lasted until she was 27, when her husband's beatings grew so bad she finally fled, fearful that she might end up killing him. Since then, her main form of support appears to have been government checks, which she supplements with "trash-picking"—gleaning discarded clothes and furniture from refuse piles in the suburbs.

On top of the welfare checks she receives for several grandchildren, Odessa also gets two disability payments under the Supplemental Security Income program, one for herself and one for her seven-year-old grandson, who was born addicted to cocaine. That brings her total income in government checks to $16,584 a year, not counting thousands more in food stamps. Her decades of reliance on welfare do not appear to strike her as anything out of the ordinary. "It seemed to her that just about everybody she knew was on the check," Zucchino writes.

Of Odessa's eight children, two seem to have escaped the disorder of the inner city for stable homes

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and families. The rest run the gamut from being partly to wholly dysfunctional. Darryl is serving a lengthy prison term for burglary and drugs. Brenda is a crack addict with four children, who supports her habit by turning tricks in back alleys. Two other daughters are on and off of welfare (mostly on), and in and out of jobs, training programs, and relationships (mostly out). Her two other sons have eight kids by four women, none of whom they have married.

And circumstances do not appear to be improving with time. Odessa's granddaughter, 19-year-old Iesha, is so neglectful of her three children that she inspires an index entry called, "Iesha, laziness of." Her unwillingness to tear herself from the soaps long enough to feed or clothe her kids exhausts even Odessa's vast reserves of patience. And whenever her children and grandchildren find themselves unable to support their children—which is often—they bequeath them to Odessa.

To call Odessa's circumstances dire would be an understatement. She weighs 240 pounds, battles severe asthma, and has a history of nervous breakdowns. She has "neither the time nor energy to wipe down the greasy kitchen walls...scraps of food fell from the table and remained on the floor for days." Since she owes the gas company $3,250, her home is warmed only on the intermittent occasions when she can afford to buy kerosene. Fortunately, she managed to buy an abandoned row house from the city years ago for $125; otherwise the extended Williams clan might have no refuge at all.

The other narrative centers around the antics of Cheri Honkala, a welfare recipient and welfare organizer who presides over a rag-tag group of protesters known as the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. Honkala appears to be Philadelphia's answer to Mitch Snyder: a foul-mouthed street guerrilla with 54 arrests and a passion for sticking her thumb in the eye of the city's welfare bureaucrats.

She specializes in occupations. First, Honkala raises a tent city of 40 or so homeless people on an abandoned industrial lot. Next she moves it to the lawn outside Independence Hall, where she delights in the tourists' revulsion. Then she breaks into an abandoned Catholic church, and with an assortment of welfare mothers, homeless men, crack addicts, and ex-cons, she turns it into a cross between a day-care center and an asylum. Fights break out. Drugs get dealt. By the end of the saga, her troops have broken into 15 repossessed HUD homes, cutting off the locks and "homesteading" them.

Like Snyder, Honkala's favorite emotion appears to be rage. "When anyone asked her why she had welfare mothers and their children living on a vacant lot in the broiling hot sun, Cheri always shot back: 'Where the fuck do you expect them to live? These people are *homeless*! Get it?'" And like Snyder—who abandoned his wife and children, beat his girlfriend, and finally hanged himself—Honkala has a shady secret.

Toward the end of the book Honkala confesses that she finances her political activity with a lucrative, late-night job: She is a topless dancer. Whether this weakens her stance as a moral leader depends on one's view of topless dancing. But certainly it weakens her claim to a welfare check, since her moonlighting brings her as much as $500 a night, in cash. In other words, this effort to debunk "the myth of the welfare queen" has, at its heart, a rather inconvenient case of welfare fraud.

The author, who treats Honkala as some modern-day Martin Luther King, does not dwell too deeply on this. He appears to accept her own explanation, that her work as a stripper is an "economic necessity," the price a committed leader must pay to keep her days free to fight for the rights of the poor. "She lit a cigarette and blew gray smoke into the moist, greasy air of the diner," he writes of the confession scene. "A smile played on her lips. 'And anyway,' she said, 'who says welfare mothers won't find work, huh?'"

So what do these portraits prove? Zucchino says they show that the poor are, well, really poor—and not living the high life that the phrase "welfare queen" evokes. "If there were any Cadillac-driving, champagne-sipping, penthouse-living welfare queens in North Philadelphia, I didn't find them," he writes. Given Honkala's unreported cash income, this isn't altogether correct. But the general point is fair enough. The book leaves little doubt that its characters are, for the most part, a dejected and defeated lot, living lives of serious material deprivation. What the author doesn't seem to realize is that this, precisely, was the welfare abolitionists' point.

By the time welfare captured center stage in the mid-1990s, Cadillacs weren't the issue. It was Ronald Reagan who, two decades earlier, had attacked the poor for abusing the programs (with his famous parable in the 1976 campaign of the Chicago welfare cheat). By 1996, the leaders of the Republican Congress had adopted the opposite tack: they attacked the programs for abusing the poor.

"By creating a culture of poverty, we have destroyed the very people we are claiming to help," Gingrich said over and over again. "You can't sustain civilization with 12-year-olds having babies and 15-year-olds selling drugs and 18-year-olds who can't read their diplomas." He didn't argue that the poor had it

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good. He argued that the poor had it bad, really bad, and that the welfare system was to blame for neither demanding nor encouraging personal responsibility.

One can argue about whether Gingrich and his lieutenants were sincere (some were, some weren't), and whether they were right (that remains to be seen). But there's little in Zucchino's book that wouldn't neatly fit their critique. In choosing such desperately disadvantaged subjects (most welfare recipients, in fact, are not as bedraggled as these), Zucchino is bolstering his opponents' case. Gingrich's line about pregnant 12-year-olds may sound like a bit of tendentious hyperbole—after all, how many pregnant 12-year-olds are there? But Zucchino actually finds one! Odessa's daughter Elaine, he reports, gave birth to the first of her six children at age 12 (in this case, after being raped), and the child is in juvenile custody by the book's end.

Rape, of course, is a crime, not an act of irresponsibility on Elaine's part. But there are plenty of those, too. After all, she conceives five more children with no particular plan for supporting them. And she almost loses them to the state after a neighbor complains that they are living in utter filth. Odessa organizes a family work-crew to clean the place up before the social worker re-inspects.

The more the details accrue, the more they seem to bolster the welfare critics' view. Whether or not welfare caused the problems the book portrays, it certainly seems to be doing little to alleviate them. Odessa's daughter Joyce had four children by four different men and raised them largely on welfare. But even Joyce finds herself "especially dismayed at the reluctance of her own daughter, Iesha, to take charge of her life and end her passive reliance on welfare." Her boyfriend, a drug addict, is in jail, and "Iesha could barely be trusted to change her babies' diapers regularly." She is snoozing when two of the children she is supposed to be watching burn down the house. Not all the parents in the book are as neglectful as Iesha. But there are enough examples of kids in filthy diapers and kids missing school and kids living with drug addicts in tents, that one wonders what in the world Zucchino has in mind when he writes that the women he met were "skilled primarily at raising children."

Perhaps, as he seems to believe, this is all the product of industrial flight. In his view, there simply aren't any jobs. And even if there were, he writes, "these women were so consumed by the business of securing housing, food, and health care," that working "was not a viable option." (One might turn that around and wonder whether housing, food, and health care are "viable options" without securing a job.)

There is, of course, a serious question about whether there are enough jobs to go around, and enough child care and transportation so that low-income mothers can take them. But one can't help noticing, in this book at least, that no one seems to be looking very hard.

Following these characters around for six months, Zucchino finds himself visiting many welfare offices, attending many protests, and picking many trash piles in the suburbs. But the trip he doesn't make may be more telling: He never finds himself accompanying someone looking for a job.

Odessa regards welfare "as part of God's bounty." Cheri, with a more secular bent, "regarded welfare as an entitlement in the strictest sense of the word." When counseling the members of her poor people's movement, she tells them to make no apologies for their welfare-dependent status. "Until society created conditions where the poor were provided with housing and jobs, she said, they had every right to take the government's money."

It comes as no surprise that most Americans disagreed. By the end of the book, the interesting question isn't, "Why did the welfare bill pass?" but "What took so long?"

To argue that the old system had become indefensible is not to say the new law will make things better. The beauty of "devolution" from the abolitionists' point of view is that it allowed them to attack the status quo, without ever quite saying what a better support system would look like. Maybe the states will figure it out; maybe they won't. President Clinton did try to articulate a solution—a mutual responsibility pact, with a safety net for those really trying—but he never truly fought for it. After unleashing a maelstrom with his "end welfare" rhetoric, he more or less dove for cover.

There are certainly reasons to worry about how the Williams clan and their counterparts will fare in a post-entitlement world of time limits and work requirements. But the early returns offer cause for cautious optimism. Case loads are plunging across the country, and tougher welfare programs (not just low unemployment) are clearly part of the reason. In Milwaukee, where the changes are perhaps most dramatic, 10,000 families have left the rolls in the last year alone. That represents a 30 percent decline in the caseload, unprecedented for a major city. Only a tiny percentage—a few dozen on a given night—have wound up in the city's shelters. And many of those families are headed by drug-addicted women, some of whom were heading for the streets anyway. Many, many more have gotten jobs. For more families than was commonly

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supposed, work may be a "viable option" after all.

And for all the talk of welfare "cuts," the case load reductions have left most states awash in cash, at least for now. And there are initial signs that some of the money, at least, is being reinvested in programs to help those harder cases that remain on the rolls with child care, transportation, and wage subsidies.

Of course, much could still go wrong. Not every state has Wisconsin's booming economy. Not every state will reinvest its windfall. No one knows how long those who find the jobs will keep them. ...Or what will happen when people lose jobs, without welfare to fall back on. ...Or what will happen to the more disadvantaged families still on the rolls. ...Or what will happen when the country hits its first recession without the stabilizing effect of an entitlement system in place for the poor. Had the liberals spent less time in denial about the shortcomings of the old system, they might have come up with a better replacement—one with less work rhetoric and more assurances of the necessary work support.

The Myth of the Welfare Queen showcases the flaws of this late-stage liberalism; awash in good intentions, it defends what cannot be defended. One even wonders whether the book's lone apparent hero, the likable, generous Odessa, has been well-served by a system that allowed nearly three decades of cash support, while asking nothing in return. Her asthma, obesity, and nerves notwithstanding, she can do some things to support herself. In fact, she does: She runs her own little taxi service, for neighbors who need rides to the grocery store. A system of public support that pushed (and helped) her to hold a real job, might have brought her a more productive life, with a greater personal sense of accomplishment. And the same goes all the more for her kids. The old system of poverty relief failed Odessa. Maybe there's still time to devise the more fruitful one she deserves.

Remembering an American Communist

Earl Browder strove to wrap Marxism in the Stars and Stripes

By Michael J. Ybarra

EARL BROWDER: The failure of American Communism
By James G. Ryan
University of Alabama Press, $34.95

IN 1927 THE COMINTERN DISpatched a corn-fed Kansas Communist named Earl Browder to China to stir the revolutionary embers in Asia. Something apparently got lost in the translation, for when the midwestern Marxist arrived in Hankow, he was greeted by banners proclaiming "Welcome the Earl of Browder."

In his own country, Browder was never mistaken for royalty. American Legionnaires pistol-whipped listeners at his speeches. Police in Terre Haute, Ind., arrested him for vagrancy as soon as he stepped off a train. Vigilantes pelted him with rotten eggs and tomatoes. Universities banned him from giving speeches. Congress cited him for contempt and the Justice Department sent him to federal prison twice; the FBI stalked his every move and Washington tried to deport his Russian-born wife until the day she died of cancer.

Browder's own comrades could be almost as nasty. His great rival in the American Communist Party, William Z. Foster, dismissed him as "that schoolboy" and spent years sharpening theoretical knives to stick in his back. Browder's closest colleagues (almost no one called him a friend) turned on him at the drop of a hat. Moscow even made Browder pay his own way to the Kremlin to plead his case after the American Party kicked him out and turned his name into a curse.

And yet Browder, who led the Communist Party of the United States of America from 1932 to 1945, was

MICHAEL J. YBARRA *is working on a book about the transformation of American politics from the New Deal to McCarthyism.*

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the greatest Communist leader America ever produced: a homegrown Stalinist who also worshiped Franklin Roosevelt; a devoted revolutionary and authoritarian leader who longed to shepherd his party into the fold of the legitimate left; a long-suffering ideologue who sacrificed much for principle but was also vainglorious in the extreme, a reckless womanizer, and an accomplice in Soviet espionage. Browder, in short, was one of the great sad sacks of American politics.

All of which makes James G. Ryan's new, workmanlike biography of Browder a both dispiriting and fascinating read—and an important contribution to the study of American Communism. "Browder helped bring American Communism greater legitimacy than it had ever known before or would enjoy again...," writes Ryan in the aptly titled *Earl Browder: The Failure of American Communism.* "A middle-aged version of the all-American boy, he was a walking refutation of every Communist stereotype. By far not the movement's most profound ideologist, Browder proved beyond question its greatest salesperson." Of course, this is like being the prettiest girl at a leper colony.

Ryan makes much of Browder's looks and attractiveness to female comrades: He had straight dark hair and intense blue eyes. But his crooked mouth gave Browder's face a sense of precariousness and a perpetual scowl that was softened only by growing a mustache. Even disregarding his politics, Browder does not come across as even remotely likable, and Ryan, a professor at Texas A&M University at Galveston, is to be congratulated, if not pitied, for having the fortitude to spend years in the company of such an unpleasant subject.

Born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1891, Browder was the son of a failed farmer and school teacher. He left home at 21, moving to Kansas City where he found work as an accountant for a Standard Oil subsidiary. Browder drifted through various left-wingisms, protested World War I, and was arrested in 1917 for advocating draft dodging. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

Prison for Browder, as for his Bolshevik heroes, was a school for revolution; it taught him discipline and gave him time to read the Marxist classics and nurse his already festering resentment against American society. When he left Leavenworth in 1921, Browder joined the fledgling American Communist Party, largely comprised of immigrants whose command of Marxism was almost as shaky as their English. All-American converts were in great demand, and Browder soon found himself on the first of what would become an annual pilgrimage to the mother church in Moscow. Tagging along was William Z. Foster, an old militant union warhorse who eventually became head of the American party. Browder became his assistant.

By 1932 Browder managed to shoulder aside the ailing Foster and assume de facto leadership of the party during the early days of the New Deal, which the Communists (following Moscow's "Third Period" policy of militancy) denounced as the advent of American fascism. Three years later the winds from Moscow were blowing another way and Browder found himself heralding the "Popular Front" policy where the party would work in train with the rest of the left. Unlike Foster, who liked nothing better than to lead the workers in a riot against the police, Browder was happiest as the radical bean counter, a New Deal cheerleader in a business suit content to nudge at American politics from the margins. (No Gramsci, Browder's prison writings included an accounting pamphlet.)

Browder excelled at domesticating the party. He argued that the Declaration of Independence foreshadowed the Communist Manifesto and extolled Jefferson and Lincoln as exemplars of American radicalism. The party played "Yankee Doodle" at its meetings, decked its platforms in the Stars and Stripes, and adopted the slogan: "Communism is 20th-Century Americanism." Membership jumped and the party's influence in unions grew steadily. Front groups sprouted like corn. Browder made the cover of *Time.* "We were not only Communists," remembered party member George Charney, "We were also Americans again."

The only thing to spoil the party was the fact that Stalin was lining up Old Bolsheviks and shooting them down as fast as he could give them a show trial. On his visits to Moscow during the Great Purge, Browder tried not to notice that old comrades were disappearing; he played chess and attended the ballet. Ryan notes, however, that just turning up at the Kremlin in those days took some guts. "At that very moment," he writes, "Browder knew Soviet Communists accused of unorthodoxy were being tried, sentenced, and executed en masse, but he believed he was reconciling the American reform tradition and world Marxism."

That became a lot harder to do when the party line switched again after the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. Some poor party hack had spent a year listening to static on a shortwave radio when Moscow finally broke the silence by ordering Browder to go on the offensive against Roosevelt. Browder dragged his heels. On one hand, he desperately wanted to make the party a player in American politics; on the other, he was at heart a Stalinist with several practical reasons for not

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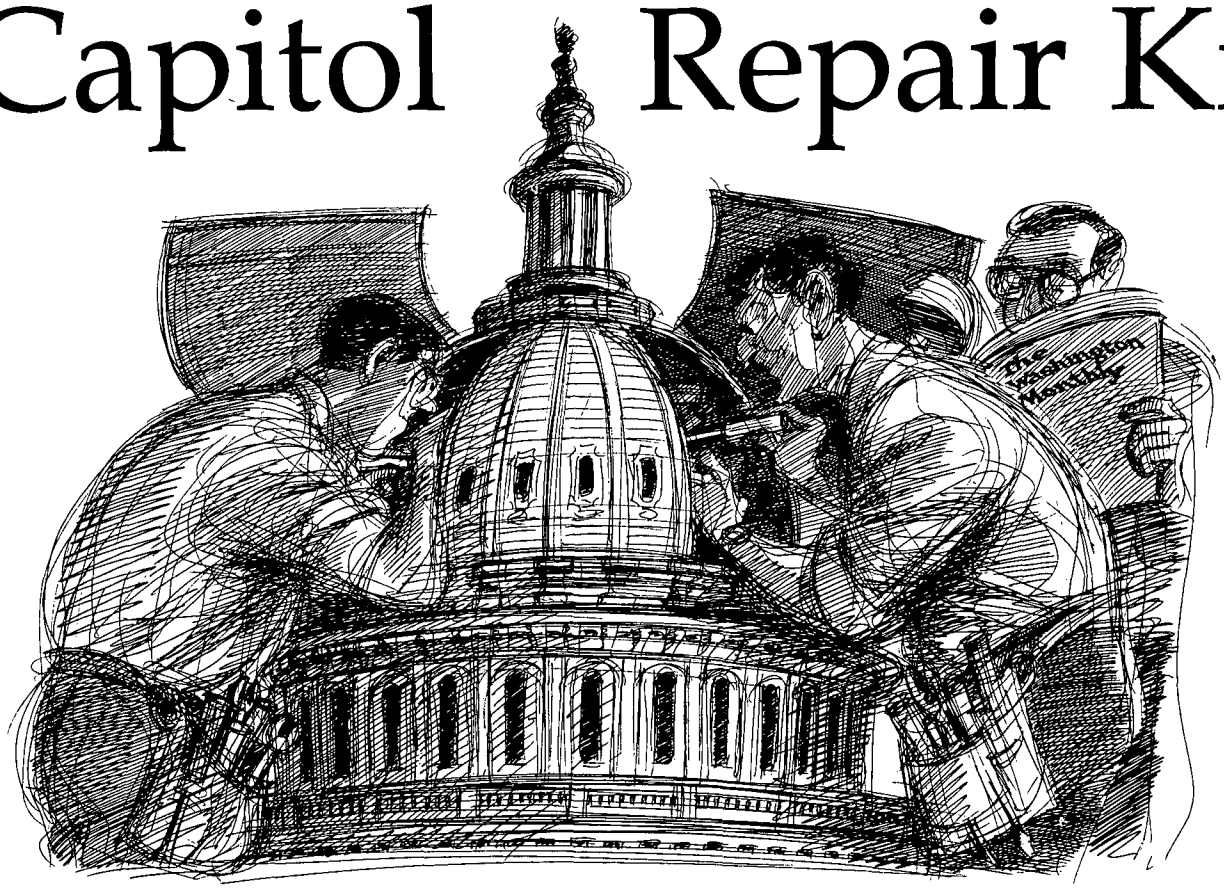

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"... holds up a deadly accurate mirror to the Washington political culture, exposing its hypocrisies, stupidities, and unexpected triumphs." —*Chicago Tribune*

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thumbing his nose at Moscow: his sister Margaret had worked for the NKVD, the forerunner of the KGB, his wife had a revolutionary past that might not sit too well with U.S. immigration authorities, and Browder himself had done a little work as a talent spotter for Soviet intelligence.

Browder's dilemma was solved when the U.S. arrested him for passport fraud. Browder turned up in court with his mustache trimmed down to a Hitlerian smudge of fur. Leaning on his correspondence school law course from a quarter of a century earlier, he took over his own case, maintaining that the charges against him were merely the opening salvo of a crackdown on civil liberties in America.

Browder's faith in the American judicial system was touching; he got four years in prison. While free pending his appeal, Browder ran for Congress from the Lower East Side, a party stronghold. He polled less than 14 percent. Undaunted, he also ran for president, finishing behind a prohibitionist candidate.

In June 1941, three months after Browder reported to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Germany invaded Russia and the Russians joined the Allies. The next year Roosevelt commuted Browder's sentence. And in 1943 FDR and Stalin met at Teheran, which Browder felt sure was a sign that the Communist and Capitalist spheres had reached a modus vivendi for the post-war world—the "greatest, most important turning point in all history," he gushed. America, Browder explained to the party in his "Teheran thesis," was unprepared for socialism, and Communist agitation would only aid the reactionaries so the party would renounce revolution. He offered to clasp J.P. Morgan to his bosom. In 1944 he dissolved the party, replacing it with the Communist Political Association. Ryan sees this as a sensible decision, a way for the party to become a bona fide part of the American political landscape and an anticipation of later attempts to reconcile Marxism with democracy, such as Titoism, Eurocommunism, and perestroika.

To celebrate this new move, Browder threw a four-day gala, starting on his birthday, at the Riverside Plaza Hotel, with U.S. flags on the stage and a huge photo of Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill at Teheran behind him. The general secretary of the CPUSA became the president of the CPA. Once again Browder felt he was swimming with the tide of history.

Then he was caught by the undertow. In April 1945 the French Communist Jacques Duclos, whose own party was anything but revolutionary, attacked Browder in the journal, *Cahiers du Communisme*, referring ominously to the CPA leader as the "former secretary." As Stalin liked to say, this was not an accident. The aged and embittered Foster jumped on Browder, and the rest of the party leadership wasn't far behind. The CPUSA was re-established in July and soon expelled its leader of 13 years. After giving almost half his life to the party, the 55-year-old Browder found himself out in the cold. He took a job hawking propaganda for the Soviets, which was not a brilliant career move during the McCarthy period. Ryan says Browder eventually abandoned even Marx, although the book inexcusably fails to elaborate on this. Browder died in 1973, his passing unremarked upon by any Communist paper in the world. "Browder tried diligently to make his organization less foreign (though no less authoritarian or bureaucratic)," Ryan concludes. "Admittedly he had undertaken an impossible task."

Ryan has attempted a somewhat more tractable one: explaining how the American Communist Party could be both an indigenous social force and the subversive hireling of a Moscow-controlled revolutionary conspiracy. Classic scholarly accounts of American Communism, such as Theodore Draper's, emphasized the latter, while New Left historians of the last couple of decades purposefully overlooked foreign domination of the party's leadership to concentrate on the idealism of rank-and-file activists. These younger scholars haven't been heard from much in the last few years since Soviet archives began gushing documents proving most of the worst of what the party's detractors had always claimed. Ryan's book, for example, started out as a dissertation that dwelled on Browder's roots in the plains and the American radical tradition, but after a visit to Moscow Ryan shifted his focus accordingly. Still, Ryan attempts something of a synthesis by showing the struggle within Browder between the dictates of meaningful radical politics and subservience to the Soviets.

In the end, it wasn't much of a contest. Browder was not a remotely moral man: He left his first wife and child for politics; he treated colleagues badly and enemies worse; he told the Jews they had nothing to fear from Hitler and ignored Stalin's various genocides. Even his resistance to Moscow seems not so much a moral grappling as a matter of power politics—the story of a wannabe Stalin seeking his own path to total control.

In Ryan's telling, Browder comes off far better than any of his other comrades in the party. Though he had physical courage aplenty and suffered much, he seems to have had less than the average allotment of moral courage. He was the best that American Communism could produce. And the best that it deserved. ●

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Deeper Deceptions

This latest book shows that Vietnam wasn't as bad as everyone thought it was—it was worse

By Peter Arnett

DERELICTION OF DUTY: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff
By H.F. McMaster
Harper & Row, $27.50

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU'D heard everything you would ever want to know about America's hapless descent into the Vietnam quagmire, along comes a book to boggle your mind with new revelations of ineptness, duplicity, and arrogance amongst the senior-most officials of the United States.

That such information has taken 30 years to see the light of day says much about the masterful chicanery of the principals and their cohorts, according to military historian H.F. McMaster. He charges President Lyndon Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara not only with cynically leading America into the Vietnam War, but with trying to escape responsibility by distorting the historical record with half-truths, misstatements, and outright lies.

Much of this has been inferred by the many critics who never could fathom why America got involved in Vietnam in the first place and who deplored the whole adventure as an inexplicable waste of lives and money. But before *ennui* moves you on to other topics, consider this: McMaster's *Dereliction of Duty* glows with the convincing detail and period patina that only the transcribed White House phone conversations and the secret diaries of powerful men can provide. It is a cautionary tale of power and political manipulation, and all too explicable.

McMaster brings a new generation's energy to the Vietnam debate. He's a young officer who signed up long after America's Vietnam involvement had ended, only to find the military haunted by the war and its unanswered questions. Proudly participating in Operation Desert Storm, McMaster was determined to find out for himself why Vietnam veterans were in shameful denial about their own experiences. His search for the truth took him from graduate work in American History at the University of North Carolina, along a paper trail that included Lyndon Johnson's newly released phone transcripts, Marine Commandant Wallace Greene's secret diaries, and thousands of other documents previously unavailable to historians and researchers. McMaster says in his introduction, "The discoveries astonished me, and I felt compelled to share them with others."

It is the canniness of McMaster's research that makes his book so interesting, comparing, as he does, the public and private record of the most critical years of decision. He discovered that the minutes of the National Security Council and Johnson's formal meetings—upon which the current literature of the war relies so heavily—are an imperfect record, because important policies were made at private meetings of the president and his inner circle, the records of which are only now becoming available.

McMaster traces Vietnam policy-making from November 1963, when Johnson took over from the assassinated John F. Kennedy, to July 1965, when the newly-elected president sent 125,000 troops to Vietnam and Americanized the war. McMaster pastes all the puzzle pieces together to reveal a plot Shakespearean in its proportions, in which those who practiced to deceive were tangled in the web of their own making.

What Lyndon Johnson feared most in 1964, McMaster determined, was losing the chance to win the presidency in his own right. He saw Vietnam principally as a danger to that goal. After the election, he feared that an American military response to the deteriorating situation in Vietnam would jeopardize chances that his landmark legislation, his Great Society, would pass Congress. What Johnson needed was a strategy to achieve both goals. This was provided by Robert McNamara, who served not only as secretary of defense, but as the president's principal policy architect.

McNamara would help the president first protect

PETER ARNETT *covered the Vietnam War for the Associated Press and is an international correspondent for CNN.*

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his electoral chances and then pass the Great Society by offering a strategy for Vietnam that would appear cheap and could be conducted with minimal public and congressional attention. McNamara's strategy of graduated military pressure, McMaster writes, permitted Johnson to pursue his objective of not losing the war in Vietnam while postponing the "day of reckoning" and keeping the whole question out of public debate all the while.

You might argue that we've heard all this before, but it is in the detail of McMaster's work that it becomes apparent that the president and his principal advisers believed that the ends justified any means—even persistent betrayal of public trust.

According to McMaster, the record shows that Johnson recognized from the beginning that he needed to make a clear choice in Vietnam between war and withdrawal from the region. Neither of these choices were palatable to him, so he turned to his all-too-compliant defense secretary for another option.

The flaws in McNamara's strategy of graduated pressure were apparent from the beginning. It ignored the uncertainties of war and the unpredictable psychology of violence in favor of systems analysis quantification—the contribution of the defense secretary's "whiz kids" to modern warfare. That graduated pressure was unlikely to break North Vietnam's will was readily apparent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, most of whom wanted to pull out of Vietnam or go all out to win. The strategy's limitations were further confirmed in two crucial Pentagon war games in 1964 that resulted in hypothetically disastrous troop escalations in a war zooming out of control.

But McMaster writes that these problems were deemed secondary to the president's domestic goals. Graduated pressure allowed him to determine the level of military force in Vietnam that would be politically palatable to the American public in an election year. Johnson then based his military strategy on the forces he intended to make available—regardless of whether that strategy addressed the stated policy goal of keeping South Vietnam anti-communist.

The author contends that, instead of tailoring the means to achieve the end, Johnson decided on the means without any regard to the end, virtually guaranteeing failure. He was interested in short term goals like his election and the Great Society, with the containment of communism at the most equal in his thinking and possibly even a less important factor than his domestic political agenda.

McMaster paints a devastating portrait of Robert McNamara as a sycophant resolved to give only the advice he knew LBJ wanted to hear, even though he was aware the strategy would ultimately fail. The author blames the defense secretary's collusion with the president for the public's ignorance of the true state of affairs at that crucial time.

The author gives examples of McNamara's misleading and outright lying to a Congress trying to get a handle on a Vietnam policy whose shape was increasingly difficult to conceal—particularly with Johnson running as the "peace candidate" in 1964 while planning an expansion of the war. McMaster says the eventual massive escalation of the war would have been impossible without McNamara's manipulation of Congress, the media, and the American people, activities given scant attention in McNamara's seemingly *mea culpa* book, *In Retrospect*. What McNamara failed to admit in his book, the author contends, was that the tactics he used to reconcile the American commitment to Vietnam with Johnson's domestic political concerns ultimately led to the flawed strategy under which the war was prosecuted.

McNamara's eminence at this time was unassailable, the author says, because the president was insecure and distrustful of anyone but his closest civilian advisers. Johnson viewed the Joint Chiefs of Staff with suspicion. As for the Joint Chiefs, says McMaster, they too failed the country: Knowing that the U.S. effort in Vietnam would take many years and hundreds of thousands of lives, they failed to forcefully present those estimates to Johnson in the hope that over time they could transform the American commitment into one more consistent with their own vision.

The author says Johnson was not interested in frank military advice from the chiefs; he simply wanted support for his policies based on the credibility associated with their uniforms. When the situation in Vietnam seemed to demand action, the president turned to his civilian advisers to determine how to postpone a decision. The relations between the president, the defense secretary, and the Joint Chiefs, says McMaster, led to the curious situation in which the nation went to war without the benefit of effective advice from the organization with statutory responsibility as the nation's principal military advisers.

McMaster finds many others close to the president in collusive denial, such as aide McGeorge Bundy, willing to advocate an expansion of the American military in both North and South Vietnam despite pessimism verging on defeatism.

Another example is the patrician soldier-statesman Gen. Maxwell Taylor, blithely misleading his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the president's inten-

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tions, and then as Ambassador to Vietnam, setting aside his own misgivings about an extensive American troop commitment to the war, and going along with the recommendations for exactly that by the commander on the ground, Gen. William C. Westmoreland.

But the dominant figure in the book is President Lyndon Baines Johnson, busily twisting arms and manipulating policy and opinion makers to forge a contrived consensus behind what many in his administration knew would lead to disaster in Vietnam. The author argues that not only did Johnson fail to recognize arguments against his Vietnam policy, and the strategy under which that policy was executed, but deliberately suppressed any arguments against the assumptions on which his policies were based. In the end, Johnson should not have been surprised by the consequences of his early decisions. The author convincingly argues that the president had disregarded the advice he did not want to hear in favor of a policy based on the pursuit of his own political fortunes and his beloved domestic programs.

McMaster's scholarship and presentation is exemplary in *Dereliction of Duty*, spiced as it is by the righteous indignation of one who, through the discovery of the White House tapes, finds the smoking gun of perfidious behavior in the highest offices of the land. The author's arguments are coherent and convincing and important to the historical record. But his findings will probably do little to assuage the angst of disillusioned Vietnam vets and the many others who are still trying to live with the waste of America's most controversial foreign war. ●

The Washington Monthly *Journalism Award*

JULY/AUGUST 1997

JOEL DRESANG AND CROCKER STEPHENSON
Work, or Else
(Milwaukee) *Journal Sentinel*

Wisconsin's tough-love welfare programs have been the subject of countless stories since Gov. Tommy Thompson introduced "Wisconsin Works" in 1995. But Dresang and Stephenson add a new dimension to the personal stories of welfare recipients. Enumerating the often overlooked problems that both clients and caseworkers face in the quest to move people from dependency to self-sufficiency, the authors demonstrate that a successful welfare-to-work program has as much to do with how new policies are implemented as with the policies themselves.

BRENDAN BYRNE AND THOMAS KEAN
The Kean-Byrne Dialogue
The Newark Star-Ledger

Lending support to the notion that experience outside of journalism makes for better journalists, former New Jersey governors Thomas Kean (R) and Brendan Byrne (D) have emerged as two of the tri-state area's finest columnists. In monthly "conversations," the political adversaries and long-time friends take on pressing issues with the unusual perspective of commentators with experience. This month's topic: how the state spends its casino redevelopment funds. But whatever the subject, careful thought and an insider's knowledge make for original, provoking columns.

MARC FISHER
Class Actions' Big Winners: The Lawyers
The Washington Post

Examining plaintiff lawyers' relentless pursuit of consumer complaints, Fisher calls into question the notion of class action suits as a way to protect "the little guy." Most cases end in "coupon settlements," from which lawyers often walk away with 20 to 30 percent of the settlement, while plaintiffs are stuck going back to the defendants to claim their measly rebate. As Fisher makes clear, and as the Monthly *has been telling readers for years, the system set up to protect the consumer has simply placed the wrongdoing of corporations in competition with the abuses of lawyers.*

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including two copies of the article or broadcast text) to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Nominations for stories run in June and July are due July 31.

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Memo of the Month

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Advocate Health Care

MEMORANDUM

TO: Incentive Program Participants

FROM: Rev. Jerry Wagenknecht, Vice President
Mission, Values and Philosophy Integration

Jerry Wagenknecht

SUBJECT: Mission Incentive Modifier

DATE: November 25, 1996

As you know, the 1996 Annual Compensation Incentive Plan will calculate executive incentive payout levels by multiplying the sum of the financial results and market share results by the **Mission Modifier**. The Compensation committee will determine the value of the **Mission Modifier** on the basis of the **Mission Integration** measurement results. In 1996, this value will range between 0.8 and 1.2.

I am forwarding to you an update on the Advocate 1996 Annual Compensation Incentive Plan/**Mission Modifier**. This update provides a definition of **Mission Integration** and the 1996 methodology for measuring it, as well as an explanation of the effect of the **Mission Modifier** on executive incentive payout levels.

Mission Integration measurement will result from three complimentary surveys administered to patients, associates, and executives participating in Advocate's Annual Compensation Incentive Plan. The **executive survey** will be mailed to you in December accompanied by a letter outlining the patient and associate surveys. The compensation committee of the Advocate Board will decide how to combine the survey results into the **Mission Integration** measurements. The **executive survey** gives you the opportunity to contribute to the determination of the **Mission Modifier** of the 1996 Annual Compensation Incentive Plan. The validity and fairness of the **Mission Integration** measurement will depend in part on the response rate to the executive survey; therefore, it is important that each of you as participants in the Annual Compensation Incentive plan complete the **executive survey**.

After the 1996 **Mission Integration** measurements have been determined, we will share the results of all three surveys and the calculation leading to the **Mission Integration** measurements.

Attachment

cc: Dr. Ben Grigaliunas
Rev. L. James Wylie

JW\exsurltr

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Political Booknotes

Master of the Obvious

by Walter Shapiro

SELF-AWARENESS IS OFTEN AN exaggerated virtue for successful authors. A few years ago when I was profiling Tom Clancy, I discovered that the bard of the techno-thriller seriously believed he was a far better writer than John le Carré. Clancy, whose uncritical self-confidence must help him churn out the bestsellers, couldn't understand how a reader might prefer le Carré's dense, atmospheric plots to his own gleefully uncomplicated us-vs.-them shoot-em-ups. That same myopia, that same uncomprehending failure to view her own work as others might, afflicts Elizabeth Drew in her inexhaustible zeal to keep chronicling modern politics with a tendentious literalness that she clearly views as high art.

WHATEVER IT TAKES
By Elizabeth Drew
Viking, $24.95

I have been baffled by Drew's appeal to serious readers ever since the days when she was filling the pages of the old *New Yorker* with her oddly uninflected recounting of the news that we all had just read from Washington. Purged by Tina Brown (just thinking about it has me humming "Rule Britannia"), Drew rebounded by continuing her dispatches from the conventional-wisdom front in hardcover form. *Whatever It Takes* (even the title is derivative of Richard Ben Cramer's epic character study of the 1988 presidential contenders, *What It Takes*) is Drew's third book about the Clinton-Gingrich years, and it crystallizes the stylistic and conceptual limitations of her approach.

As always, Drew's prose style makes *Congressional Quarterly* seem lively in comparison. Take this pivotal paragraph that sets up the thesis of *Whatever It Takes*:

> By early 1996, Gingrich was the most unpopular national politician. (He had only a 30 percent approval rating.) He had helped Clinton restore his political fortunes. The showdown between Clinton and Gingrich was the predicate for the 1996 congressional as well as presidential elections.

Even a wire-service reporter, facing tight deadlines, would have found a few adjectives to garnish these insipid sentences. More unsettling is the banality of Drew's central conceit: that only a reporter of her vast experience could have gleaned the hidden truth that in 1996 *The Real Struggle for Political Power in America* (that's what it promises on the book's dust jacket) was between Clinton and Gingrich. No one writing about politics during the dispiriting 1996 campaign, myself included, ever figured that one out. Serves the rest of us right for deciding in late October that Bob Dole was certain to be the next president.

To her credit, Drew did make the astute decision that her mission in 1996 would be to cover the struggle for control of the House of Representatives. *Whatever It Takes* begins with sketches of a handful of the 70 right-wing activists who convene each Wednesday morning in the Dupont Circle offices of Gingrich acolyte and conservative impresario Grover Norquist, who heads Americans for Tax Reform. From the NRA to the beer wholesalers (they don't want Big Government levying sin taxes), Drew adroitly identifies the groups with the most to lose if the Democrats reclaimed the house.

But Drew suffers from the Faustian bargain implicit in access journalism: the inability to be skeptical about her sources. In a recent devastating profile of Norquist in *The New Republic*, Tucker Carlson portrays this purported ideological purist as behaving no differently than "any other cash-addled, morally malleable lobbyist in Washington." Particularly unsavory is Norquist's current status as a paid lobbyist for his one-time foe, Albert Rene, the left-wing dictator of the Seychelles. Carlson calls Norquist's flackery "a remarkably cynical reversal, even by Washington standards." But Drew devotes only half a paragraph to Norquist's born-again career as a lobbyist, totally missing the ideological backflip inherent in his representation of the Seychelles. Small wonder that *The New Republic* profile ends with Norquist proudly hosting a book party for his devoted Boswell, Elizabeth Drew.

Having decided to spend the 1996 campaign as a House-keteer, Drew covered the 100 hotly contested House races like a Vietnam War correspondent who never strayed far from the comforts of Saigon. Aside from one trip to the Seattle area and visits to Massachusetts (always a hardship post) and Pennsylvania, Drew seemingly never ventured more than a cab ride away from the Washington TV studios during the entire 1996 campaign. (Okay, she also deigned to attend the conventions, which she obligingly recounts in two non-reflective, empty-your-notebooks chapters).

The inevitable result of Drew's outside-the-Beltway phobia is a narrative studded with Washington talking heads and little else. At times she veers dangerously close to a Bob Woodward parody as in this mock-dramatic passage: "In early September, Tom O'Donnell, Dick Gephardt's chief of staff, was optimistic, but cautiously so, about the Democrats' chances of retaking the House. 'If the thing were held today, I think we'd take it back,' he told me." Not only is Drew serving up the spin of the day as if it were an exclusive, but the tepid quote is also indicative of the way that nobody seems to use colorful metaphors or vivid language in her presence. As she declares elsewhere in the book in what may be an inadvertent self-portrait, "Washington is filled with driven, humorless people."

Drew's dogged earnestness does serve her well in striking the proper tone of moral outrage over the soft-money scandals that besmirched both

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the 1996 presidential and congressional campaigns. She details how the AFL-CIO, for example, has the same person targeting both its PAC contributions and its supposedly (ha!) nonpolitical "issue advocacy" ad budget. She hits the right note in identifying the central affront to democracy in the way Clinton funded his money-talks re-election campaign: "One of the most precious commodities in America, if not the world—the President's time—was parceled to the White House meetings with prospective or recent large donors, and the people they brought along."

But Drew's wanderings down the political money trail were episodic, and only marginally compensate for the haven't-I-read-this-before quality of the rest of her book. Even as a moralist, Drew is a disappointment because she insists on taking hustlers like Grover Norquist at face value. The fetid campaign scandals of 1996 were nothing short of an indictment of the entire Washington political culture. And Drew remains too entwined with that world to look beyond her notebook and the smiling faces of her carefully cultivated sources. The final verdict on *Whatever It Takes*: right topic, wrong author.

WALTER SHAPIRO, *a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *is a political columnist for* USA Today.

The Next World War

by Mark Feldstein

FOR YEARS, JOHN KERRY HAS been known as the "other" senator, overshadowed by his more famous Massachusetts colleague Edward Kennedy, or confused with Nebraska's senatorial war hero Bob Kerrey. Even now, as he prepares for a possible presidential bid, John Kerry is perhaps less known for his genuine accomplishments than for his recent marriage to millionaire heiress Theresa Heinz, widow of the ketchup magnate.

That's a shame, for John Kerry has been one of the few truly original—even heroic—members of Congress, consistently ahead of his time. Kerry investigated the secret world of Oliver North well before the Iran-Contra scandal went public, and took on Manuel Noriega's drug dealing when Panama's dictator was still a darling of the C.I.A. Kerry also led the charge against the corrupt B.C.C.I. bank, at a time when other Democrats deferred to its hired gun, Democrat Clark Clifford.

Now, Kerry has written a book connecting the dots of these and other seemingly unrelated international scandals, in a call-to-arms titled *The New War*. His thesis is simple: In the aftermath of the cold war, the new enemy has become global crime—from Colombia's Cali cartel to the Russian mafia, from Chinese triads to Japanese yakuza, from respectable banks that launder dirty money to the politicians on the take world-wide that make it all possible. For just as technology and the economy have gone global, so, too, has crime.

THE NEW WAR
By Sen. John Kerry
Simon & Schuster, $23

At first blush, Kerry's slender and dryly sober book seems little more than a compendium of ethnic crimes encircling the globe, a kind of international edition of *Reefer Madness*. After all, now that the cold war is over, a new enemy must be invented to replace the Soviets; America's security apparatus is in search of a new mission to justify its swollen budget.

But it would be as wrong to dismiss Kerry now as it was to challenge his warnings about Manuel Noriega before 1989. Kerry is onto something important and serious in his frightening tale about the growing sophistication and ruthlessness of international criminal cartels, which threaten our national security in ways previously never dreamed of. "Today's transnational criminal cartels use high-speed modems and encrypted faxes," Kerry points out:

> They buy jet airplanes three or four at a time and even have stealth-like submersibles in their armadas. They hire the finest minds to devise encryption systems and provide the complex accounting procedures any multi-billion dollar empire requires. They engage the ablest lawyers...the craftiest spin doctors...the most persistent—and generous—lobbyists.

Not only is much of the violence on America's streets a direct outgrowth of global gangsters, Kerry writes, crack-cocaine was itself created and disseminated as a deliberate marketing decision by the Colombian cartel seeking to penetrate a new, less affluent American market. Kerry is careful not to minimize U.S. culpability for creating the demand for drugs in the first place; but "crime today is not simply random or local; more often it is purposeful and global."

For example:

- In England, cyberterrorists extorted tens of millions of pounds from British banks and defense companies after gaining access to their computers and threatening havoc. Law enforcement officials believe it is only a matter of time before airlines, communication satellites, or even missile systems are similarly penetrated.
- The Russian mafia are not only vying for nuclear stockpiles, they are hiring unemployed Russian scientists to create new and deadly synthetic drugs to export.
- Colombia's drug cartel is now working hand-in-hand with criminal groups from four continents, costing the United States an estimated $200 billion per year—roughly equal to our entire defense budget.

The metaphor of war permeates Kerry's writing. "Having exhausted our rhetoric on everything from wars on poverty to wars on drugs, *we* may not think it's an all-out war, but *they* do," he writes "They know exactly what it is: War of a new kind, the whole globe its theater of operations." Kerry's prescription: "America must lead an international crusade...just as we led the world in the fight against" communism and "rogue" states like Iraq.

Kerry offers a number of solutions: beefing up U.S. law enforcement abroad, expanding laws for extradition and asset forfeiture, cracking down on money laundering centers like the Cayman Islands, establishing transnational courts to try global gangsters,

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and creating sorely needed minimum standards in international law.

These are good ideas, but easier proposed than established. Perhaps the United Nations could push them through, expanding its portfolio in a way that even Jesse Helms could support.

At the heart of all this is the fundamental fact that we must redefine what threatens our "national security." It is no longer communism or a single antagonistic superpower like the Soviet Union, but numerous threats of lesser but equally lethal enemies: terrorists with access to conventional and nuclear weapons, ozone depletion or other environmental destruction that endangers the entire planet, food and water shortages that create refugees and destabilize governments, and, of course, the criminal cartels on which Kerry focuses.

Kerry is a better senator than author; his prose can be overly earnest and wooden, filled with accurate but sometimes grating self-promotion for his leadership on these issues. And for all of his soaring war rhetoric, he ducks the really hard question of whether the U.S. should use military force to tackle these global gangs.

Still, Kerry deserves credit for thinking big, and once again getting ahead of the curve, particularly since these issues have largely been cornered by conservatives. That's unfortunate, because as Kerry realizes the dangers posed by global gangs should not be a matter of ideology but simply of common sense. Yet the left has largely ignored this issue, focusing instead on the rise of another new international actor, the multinational corporation.

What neither the left nor the right seem to appreciate is the ironic parallel between the two. Of course, multinational corporations provide jobs and products we all use, while multinational criminal gangs are strictly parasites feeding off the violence and destruction they create. But both now exercise enormous power world-wide, often dwarfing—sometimes controlling—the increasingly weak governments that are supposed to be in charge. Both can undermine a nation's stability—whether by force and terror or by exporting jobs. Neither have any genuine accountability to the communities whose fates they control.

For all the talk about the dangers of Big Government, we may be entering an era when government is the only antidote to the newfound power of both global gangs and global corporations.

Perhaps what we really need is another trustbuster like Teddy Roosevelt to take on both the criminal and the corporate cartels. John Kerry—war hero, millionaire Yankee liberal, self-promoting iconoclastic thinker—would seem the logical heir of TR's swashbuckling legacy, the man who would like to lead the charge up the next century's San Juan Hill.

MARK FELDSTEIN *is an investigative correspondent for CNN's* IMPACT.

The Too Quiet Man

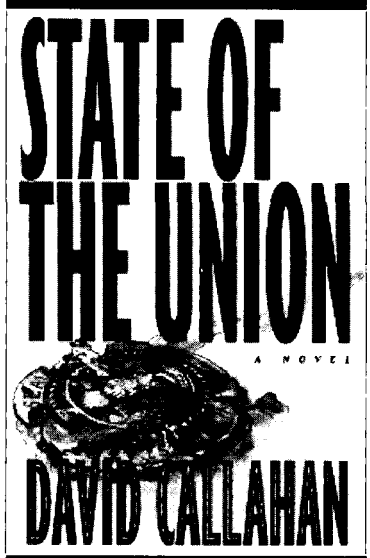
by Robert Dallek

IN THIS AGE OF POLITICAL sleaziness, when the most memorable events of our late 20th-century public life seem to be sex and money scandals that reach into the White House and Congress, it is well to remember that we have done better in the past. "In times of change and danger," John Dos Passos said, "a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present."

George Ball is one of those "lifelines." A midwestern Stevenson Democrat who served as undersecretary of state in the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, Ball is best remembered as a consistent opponent of the war in Vietnam and an effective advocate of European union. Born in 1909, Ball saw the lessons of the century's two world wars as the need to transform Europe from a group of antagonistic national states into a continent served by a multilateral force and common economic goals promoting international prosperity.

French defeat in Vietnam and the lessons of Korea convinced Ball that an expanding American commitment against communism in Vietnam was a grave error. Along with Senators Mike Mansfield and Wayne Morse, Ball accurately foresaw the cost in blood, treasure, and domestic tranquillity to be paid as a result of the greatest U.S.

A right-wing military cabal is poised to take over the United States—until one man stumbles onto the conspiracy and undertakes a solo mission to prevent the collapse of democracy.



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foreign policy error in the country's history. From 1961 to 1966, his was the only voice in the decision-making councils to warn consistently against the tragic policies in southeast Asia.

James A. Bill, director of the Reves Center for International Studies at the College of William and Mary, warmly makes the case for Ball's virtues in a "behind the scenes" study of his role in American diplomacy. Though not a conventional biography tracing Ball's life from birth to death in the rich detail common to the genre, this book provides enough personal background and attention to the principal actions of Ball's public career to qualify as the best biography of the man to date.

GEORGE BALL: Behind the Scenes in U.S. Foreign Policy
By James A. Bill
Yale University Press, $30

Bill's book has much to tell us about how and why we conducted our foreign affairs toward Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America during the cold war years. But his story inevitably winds back to Vietnam and the ill-fated discussions that shaped policy in the 1960s. Much of what Bill describes is familiar—the meetings with JFK and LBJ, Rusk, McNamara, the two Bundys, Rostow, Clifford, the Joint Chiefs, the wise men, and a host of secondary characters who struggled to define a sensible response to the challenge in southeast Asia.

Bill uses this material to pose the central questions that historians will forever debate about Ball and Vietnam: Because he was so prescient about the consequences of involvement in the war, why didn't he make his views public, especially in 1966 after he left the administration? Instead, Ball consistently defended Johnson and his Vietnam policy in public. As late as 1971, for example, after the publication of the Pentagon Papers, "Ball argued that the Johnson administration never deliberately deceived the American public about the war."

According to Bill, Ball's decision not to break with LBJ rested on five considerations: A resignation in protest would have been "an empty and ineffective gesture"; it would have been an inexcusable act of disloyalty to colleagues who were doing their best for the country; it would have destroyed his ability to put some restraints on Vietnam actions and influence foreign policy initiatives in other parts of the world; Vietnam represented only a small part of his duties, perhaps as little as 10 percent; and it would have foreclosed the possibility of shaping future international events in another administration, where he hoped he might become secretary of state.

Bill acknowledges that Ball's explanation of his decision not to take public issue with the Vietnam policy was flawed. When Richard Nixon continued the war for four years after becoming president in 1969, Ball did not hesitate "to frontally and publicly attack the administration." Ball's actions suggest a measure of self-serving political calculation that diminishes his stature as a statesman and make him comparable more to a Robert McNamara than a George Marshall.

"In spite of George Ball's blemishes," Bill concludes, "his career stands on balance as an enduring model of excellence in statesmanship. He practiced a special prudence that enabled him to make the link between ideals and realities with a moral context." Perhaps. A future biography that looks in greater detail at Ball's career may help us take a surer measure of the man and his important career.

ROBERT DALLEK *is a history professor at Boston University.*

Say You Want a Devolution?

by Gareth Cook

CALL IT THE ALADDIN PRINCIple: Be careful what you wish for—you just might get it. For years, the nation's governors (especially the Republicans) have insisted that if the federal government would just give them responsibility for big programs like welfare, they could do a much better job. Their genie came in the form of the 1994 Republican Congress, elected on a surge of animus toward the federal government. And with that, the rhetoric of devolution—sending authority back to the states—has been turning into reality. So the irony was rich several months ago, when the National Governors Association, including top Republicans like New York's George Pataki, complained that the states were being left holding the bag on welfare.

The difference between the theory of devolution—beloved mantra of the GOP, slogan of New Democrats, and widely popular with the public—and its application in reality is the topic of *Disunited States*. Written by John Donahue, an associate professor at Harvard's Kennedy School who served as a top lieutenant in the Reich Labor Department, *Disunited States* is a timely and evenhanded reminder that devolution has a downside.

Disunited States begins with a simple, if daunting, question: How will American government change as authority is moved away from Washington, D.C., to the 50 states? The answer, quite simply, is that states will have more leeway to lower their taxes and decrease their spending on social services in the already heated competition to attract well off residents (who consume few services) and large corporations (which bring jobs).

Already the bidding war has developed into a race to the bottom. Take the case of the incentive packages states offer corporations. In 1980, for example, Ohio offered Honda a package worth about $20 million to attract a new plant. That worked out to around $3,800 per job. By 1992, South Carolina was offering BMW a package worth upwards of $65,000 per job. As the war between the states intensifies, more and more money flows from state treasuries (where it could be used to build schools, maintain parks, or lift families out of poverty) to the profit lines of the companies.

Similarly, in order to lure high-income residents, states have made their tax policies increasingly regressive. States tend to rely more on consumption taxes, which disproportionately hurt those on modest incomes. Only nine states have top income tax brackets above $50,000, and state tax revenue raised from corporations has fallen by a third since 1980. Under

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such systems, the more work states are asked to do, the heavier the burden will become on those least able to pay.

While there are no easy measures to determine whether the bidding war between states also encourages regressive spending policies, it's not hard to imagine that the same forces that skew tax policy in favor of the rich apply here as well. And with more and more money going to tax cuts, state governments can't afford to be as activist, no matter what their intentions.

At its extreme then, national devolution threatens to become a kind of national dissolution. As the federal government steps back, states fight increasingly damaging bidding wars with each other. Regressive policies are the natural winners. The rich get richer, the poor more hopeless; the middle class falters. This insight is the book's greatest contribution.

But *Disunited States* is not without its flaws. The writing is at times dry and academic and, more seriously, the overall emphasis is muddled—a product, I imagine, of the book's origins in the author's research on state competition for business investment. Important themes are missed.

One example: Donahue fails to explain clearly the political rhetoric which surrounds the devolution debate. And to ignore the rhetoric is to lose the argument. Indeed, one of the driving forces behind "sending power to the states" is not a judgment that states can serve the people better—but a cynical calculation that talk of empowering the states is good cover for downsizing government, especially social services. When, under the banner of "new federalism," Reagan consolidated scores of programs into state block grants, the end result was less funding. Or take welfare reform, the most important example thus far of devolution: It's clear that a good number of the people who talked the talk of "helping people help themselves" were actually more interested in helping themselves balance the budget on the backs of the poor. That's why Pataki and friends, the governors who will get stuck paying more—or explaining to their constituents why legal immigrants shouldn't be eligible—are having second thoughts.

Donahue does provide some rhetorical correctives to devolution chic. He reminds us that states are not necessarily more efficient, or even "closer to the people," than the federal government. And it is state and local government, not the federal government, that has been getting truly big. But these points, too, are made only in passing; a coherent discussion of the ways conservatives argue their case— and why liberals are sometimes afraid to disagree—would have served the reader better.

DISUNITED STATES
By John D. Donahue
Basic Books, $25

Disunited States would also have been a stronger (and more useful) book if Donahue had tried to address the question it naturally raises: How can government do a better job as states behave more and more like a pack of dogs with not enough bones to go around?

One important answer to this question is a bit of common sense familiar to *Monthly* readers: Government needs to create an environment in which good ideas flourish and bad ones die quickly. States are often given the "laboratories of democracy" moniker, but, as Donahue mentions, states are slow to learn from the successes and failures of one another. There is not much use in experimenting if the lessons are not applied. So the federal government should take improving state government as a core mission: gathering useful information about what is working well, and making sure word gets around.

That is a topic in which politicians should be much more interested. Then again, if politicians were to spend as much time talking about how to fix government as they do talking about how to break it down, we wouldn't need to be waiting for genies.

GARETH COOK *is news editor of* The Boston Phoenix.

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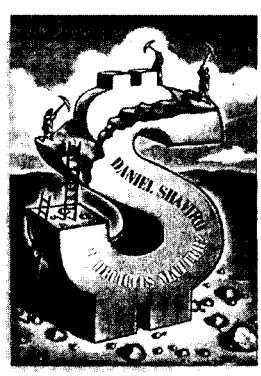

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Walsh's Last Stand

by Matthew Dallek

On December 24, 1992, seven weeks after losing a hard-fought re-election campaign, President George Bush pardoned six men indicted in the Iran-Contra affair. The investigation was in its sixth year, had cost over $30 million, and had been the source of many restless nights for the special prosecutor in charge, Lawrence Walsh. The Judge, as many colleagues called Walsh, could have responded to the pardons with a simple statement declaring that his investigation was over. He could have just declared victory and gone home.

But Walsh, a prosecutor by training and temperament, decided to go down fighting. Appearing before a gaggle of reporters and cameras in Oklahoma City, Walsh blasted Bush's pardons as a "signal that if you work for the government, you are above the law. ...It demonstrates," Walsh lamented, "that powerful people with powerful allies can commit serious crimes in high office—deliberately abusing the public trust—without consequence." He made similar charges on CNN, *Nightline*, and PBS, telling Robert MacNeil that the presidential pardon was "the last card in the cover-up. [Bush has] played the final card."

FIREWALL: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover-Up
By Lawrence E. Walsh
Norton, $29.95

Unable to try his case in a court of law, Walsh turned to the more mercurial court of public opinion. Almost five years later, he is still at it. Judging by his new book *Firewall: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover-Up*, the octogenarian Republican prosecutor is not terribly well-suited to the change of venue, a fact he seems to acknowledge in the book's early pages. "This narrative attempts to limit the repetition of facts to that which is necessary to an evaluation of my developing views and the actions of others as well as myself, but even so, extensive repetition is at times inevitable." The warning helps, but for only so long. When men by the name of Ledeen start "meet[ing] with Gorbanifar, Kimche, Schwimmer, and Nimrodi during September, October, and November," don't be surprised if your eyes glaze over and you start wondering why anyone but the most gungho Iran-Contra buff would want to tackle this 531-page tome.

Behind the plodding prose, however, is a sincere effort by Walsh to recount, memo by memo, why he decided to prosecute Col. Oliver North, John Poindexter, and other administration officials, and how President Reagan's top aides hid diaries and feigned ignorance to protect their boss. Drawing on what must be gigantic stacks of government memos, trial transcripts, and depositions, Walsh accuses Reagan of authorizing arms shipments to Iran in exchange for hostages (thus violating the Arms Export Control Act) and allowing the proceeds from the arms sales to fund the Nicaraguan Contras, or "freedom fighters," in violation of the Boland Amendment. The President, Walsh contends, was in the thick of Iran-Contra from the get-go, and when word of the scandal leaked, the President's men held high-level cabinet meetings in which they decided to blame North and other subordinates, effectively erecting a "firewall" around Reagan.

Many of the statutes at issue, including Boland, are loosely worded and, Walsh decides, not the best grounds for criminal prosecution. So instead of charging North & Co. with a broad conspiracy to defraud the government, Walsh pursues more mundane, though still felonious, crimes—like lying to Congress. Even this is no easy task. Like the protagonist in the movie *After Dark*, Walsh is thwarted at every turn, his goals—in this case truth, justice, and trial dates—obstructed by oftentimes sinister forces beyond his control.

Take, for example, the criminal trial of Col. Oliver North. The problems begin with Congress, which grants North immunity in exchange for his testimony. Under the law Walsh's prosecutors are still allowed to try the colonel; but to do so they must avoid all mention of North's congressional testimony, a constraint that forces these high-profile lawyers to flee the room any time Ollie appears on TV.

As the case is about to begin, North's defense team requests thousands of classified government documents, delaying the trial for months. (The documents are eventually produced, but—no surprise—the information had already been made public.) Walsh's team finally gets its day in court, convicting the colonel of lying to Congress, shredding documents, and accepting a home security system from a crony. Yet 14 months later, in the summer of 1990, an appellate court ruled by a 2-to-1 vote that the judge in the first trial had not looked hard enough into whether North's congressional testimony had been used against him. The decision made another trial all but impossible, and Walsh had little choice but to dismiss the case.

Intransigent bureaucracies, arrogant senators, bumptious defense attorneys, and right-wing judges could drive insane even the most hardened prosecutors, yet Walsh perseveres. We glimpse the Judge doggedly pursuing the higher-ups, discovering juicy notes of meetings between the President and his cabinet while negotiating plea agreements with a few CIA and State Department officials, most notably Alan Fiers and Elliot Abrams.

Walsh devotes several chapters to the president's men—chief of staff Donald Regan, Secretary of State George Shultz, Attorney General Ed Meese, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger—detailing what each man knew about the arms shipments and when he knew it. After a painstaking investigation, Walsh concludes that only Weinberger, who according to Walsh withheld notes and lied to Congress, is worth indicting. After haggling unsuccessfully with Weinberger's defense attorneys, Walsh starts preparing for trial, only to have Bush issue his Christmas Eve pardons.

Walsh has now spent a decade pouring over documents, deposing witnesses, and thinking and writing about the Iran-Contra affair. In that

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time he has accumulated some powerful evidence supporting his claim that at the heart of Iran-Contra lay not a few rogue superpatriots shipping arms to Iran, but rather a massive cover-up by powerful G-men. Yet all prosecutors need to construct clear, compelling cases; and *Firewall*, Walsh's attempted *coup de grace*, at times reads so much like a rambling legal brief that the charges are difficult to decipher, and the conclusions murky.

Walsh is on firmer ground when he reminds us that independent counsels are faced with enormous, sometimes insuperable and unnecessary problems. Walsh suggests several remedies: Congress should think long and hard before granting immunity to those facing indictment; the national security bureaucracy should loosen its often exaggerated stranglehold on "secret documents"; and politicians should be very careful about attacking independent counsels and turning legal investigations into political crusades. Sound advice for the nation from someone who knows.

MATTHEW DALLEK's *first book,* The Making of Ronald Reagan, *will be published by the Free Press.*

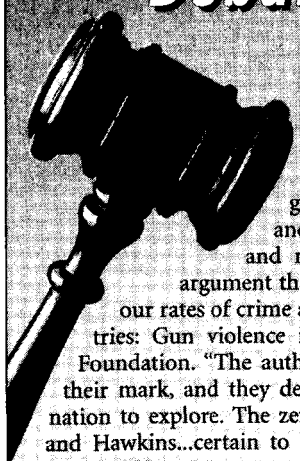
A Dream Deferred

by Stanley Meisler

IN A SAD WAY, THE DRAMA OF this book has been snuffed out by current events. Historians Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley have put together a solid analysis of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's vision of four (the British persuaded him to add France and make it five) policemen ordering the world as permanent members of the Security Council, in a new global organization called the United Nations. If the book had been published four or five years ago, we would have had a sense of this vision fulfilled.

After the Persian Gulf War, U.N. diplomats and bureaucrats felt that the Security Council could, in fact, order the world. So long as the Big Five of the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China agreed, the council

Debatable Issues



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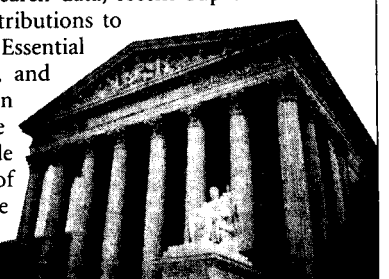

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could do anything. With cold war animosities gone, agreement could be reached more often than not. But then came Somalia, Bosnia, and the Clinton administration's decision to drastically downgrade the U.N. as an instrument of foreign policy.

Can there be any more pitiful example of U.N. impotence than its recent performance in Zaire? The U.N. did nothing to protect the Hutu refugees in its care from slaughter by Tutsi soldiers. In the last months of 1996, the Canadians were preparing to lead a U.N. force into Zaire to protect the refugees, but U.S. officials undermined the mission by insisting that almost all the refugees had already returned to Rwanda. Relief workers protested this claim, but by the time the evidence proved the official American contention wrong, all enthusiasm for a Canadian-led intervention had dissipated. If FDR's five policemen cannot even keep order in Zaire, where can they? As a result of the organization's present weakness, a reader comes to this account of the U.N.'s origins with a strong taste of regret. So little of its vision has been fulfilled.

FDR AND THE CREATION OF THE U.N.
By Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley
Yale University Press, $30

Nonetheless, the history makes for an interesting read. Roosevelt, mindful of the humiliation of the League of Nations in the 1930s, wanted a strong U.N. that would use military power to put down aggression. He pushed his idea on his allies throughout World War II. Winston Churchill did not feel much like talking utopia while caught in terrible battle, but he did not want to offend his rich and powerful source of supplies and troops. Likewise, Stalin was far more concerned with battle than postwar planning, but he could see nothing wrong with Five Policemen, so long as he was one of them.

State Department planners filled in the details of Roosevelt's sketchy ideas, and this book makes it clear that the U.N. was organized along the lines set down by American bureaucrats. Like other U.N. historians, Hoopes and Brinkley assign major roles to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and his little-known aide, Leo Pasvolsky. The two authors do not go in much for personality portraits, not even of FDR, but they do a good job in their descriptions of Hull and his frustration over working for a president who belittled him.

The authors describe all the contentious issues: a veto for the Big Five on everything except a Security Council decision to discuss a matter, seats for the Ukraine and White Russia even though they were then no more independent of Moscow than New York and California were of Washington, a seat for Argentina despite its embrace of Hitler, the charter's inclusion of the right of countries or organizations like the Pan-American Union to defend themselves. Although Hoopes and Brinkley come up with only a few revelations about the U.N.'s origins—I did not know, for example, that FDR wanted the Security Council to be headquartered on an island in the Azores—all the essential sources are mined in this readable account.

STANLEY MEISLER, *a foreign affairs writer with the* Los Angeles Times, *is the author of* United Nations: The First Fifty Years.

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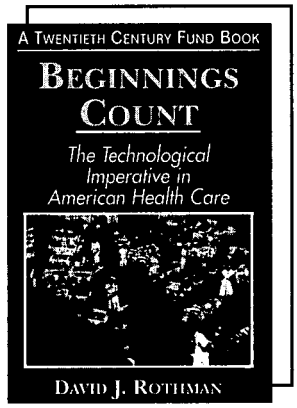

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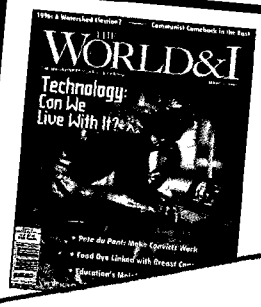

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